AMERICA
or The Sacrifice

BY ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

A Romance of the American Revolution

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Dedicated
To My Friend
FRANK HITCHCOCK
To Whose
Wisdom, Loyalty and Friendship
I Owe So Much

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IT appears to the writer that nothing is more important to the English speaking peoples of to-day than to remember that the War of the American Revolution was a contest between geographically separated subjects of the same King—people of the same race, the same blood, and fundamentally imbued with the same traditions, beliefs, and ideals.

It was a fratricidal strife. Settled, and two branches of the same Race being firmly established, these branches generally have continued to pursue, separately, a common purpose and ideal.

Whenever, since, have been planted other and geographically separated communities of this same race, their beliefs and ideals and aims have remained, practically, those common to the race.

It is well to cultivate this memory of a common origin and of a common ideal and purpose.

That this memory should never fade, should be, perhaps, the most important policy of all English speaking peoples.

For there may come a day when this great race is to face a hostile world united against it. Not necessarily a world in arms, although that, too, is possible.

Therefore, it seems to the author of this story that it is desirable for all English speaking peoples to keep in touch with one another,—not only for racial and selfish reasons but because we believe the world of men will be the better for such a cordial understanding, and that, through ideals, principles, and purpose founded upon our common heritage, the problems that vex the world, ultimately may be solved.

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

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PROLOGUE

Loup d'Orange

TO write one's memoirs while one is still young seems presumptuous.

Memoirs, generally, are written by the aged who, either from desire for applause or because of regret for pleasures ended, strive to live their lives again by telling what they have seen and done.

Neither vanity nor regret urges me to this record; because nothing that I have so far accomplished is deserving of applause; nor have I any desire to live over these eight and bloody years now ended.

My purpose is otherwise. Anxiety is my motive. For, in these memoirs, I have ventured to remind those who shall be living a hundred years from to-day when we, who are living now, shall seem unreal as ghosts in old wives' tales, that the liberty we strove for and secured for posterity was not lightly won; nor can be easily preserved. And that, if this new Republic which we have founded is to endure, then it must ever be guarded with that same ardour, vigilance, wisdom and self-sacrifice that established it.

To swerve from the natal principles of our Republic is perilous. To fetter the least of its inherent liberties means its end. Laws alone can not maintain it. But laws can slay it.

Free thought, free speech, and personal liberty are its foundations. Intolerance and bigotry are quicksands that shall undermine any fabric ever raised by man. Beware the fool whose text is Holy Writ! Beware the

oppression of majorities! God guard you from the tyranny of your neighbour's conscience.

So, with no apology for these personal recollections of a man still young, who, God willing, has the better part of life before him, I shall have the honour to acquaint you with the history of such people as I knew, and of events in which they played their parts; and shall endeavour to do so with the politeness and civility due to the living and to the dead alike.

And first I shall ask leave to discover to you how on what slight accidents of chance are riveted events of moment. Thus I shall attempt to make it briefly clear how my small part in these events was apportioned me by hazard, circumstance, and fate.

When I was but a little lad my father, a freeholder of Lexington in Massachusetts Bay, determined to make of me a missionary.

He was a farmer,—a plain, stern, and upright man who tilled his fields and feared only God and hell-fire.

Always he meant kindness; but he ruled my mother and me with the iron rod of conscience, and drove us toward Heavenly Pastures along that straight and narrow lane fenced in by word and law revealed, and awful threat of punishment eternal.

He destined me, as I say, for the ministry; and he shaped all my thoughts to the end that I should one day matriculate at Harvard College, where I should prepare myself for missionary work among the heathen Indians of North America.

My honoured father had a brother who was a minister—a tall, dour, lame man, who had been assistant schoolmaster at Dr. Wheelock's in Lebanon, but who now maintained, in the Housatonic Valley, a small sectarian school for Indian as well as for white children.

To this remote school, when very young, I was despatched. I did not desire to go. My mother wept. I also.

I did not wish to become either a minister or a

missionary. My father was inflexible. Only kindness was meant. But the tyranny of my father's conscience saddened my mother's remaining years and sickened me for ever of any creed.

Nathan Holden is my name; my father's name was Elisha; my uncle's, Absalom. My uncle was a mirthless man who feared God. . . . I feared God, horribly, when I was a child. I fear Him no longer. For that word "fear" I hold a bitter hatred. I have seen too much of fear ever to believe that God desires so infamous a tribute.

Well, I travelled to Stockbridge by coach to my uncle's school—a sad, strange, lonely journey for a frightened little boy—and there were no villages very near it,—the nearest being Stockbridge and Pittsfield; and, across the mountains, Deerfield, and other remote hamlets of bloody history.

This had been the country inhabited by a portion of that part of the great Algonquin race known as River Indians. Among these were remnants of the Mohican and Siwanois nations—the latter more like a clan of the Mohican—or rather, perhaps, of the great Delaware stock.

But such Mohicans and Siwanois as remained in the Province of Massachusetts Bay now roamed south of us; and those Indians of Algonquin stock who dwelt near the Housatonic Valley were called Loup d'Orange.

Loup means wolf; and why they were called *Wolves of Orange* I never knew, although I heard it said that they once had dwelt near Albany in New York Province, and that the ancient name for Albany was Orange, or rather Fort Orange.

Some people spoke of these Loups as "Stockbridge Indians." There were not many of them, and I think they never had been a numerous people.

Now the majority of these Loups d'Orange were Christian Indians—not like the fierce "Praying Indians" of Canada,—I mean the Caughnawagas, who were but

self-exiled Iroquois,—nor do I mean the cruel "Loups" of the far Northwest. For these Loups d'Orange were dignified, honest, self-respecting converts, very poor, very grateful for the Gospel and for education offered their children.

They lived, however, in a wild state; were inclined to be more nomadic than the Iroquois, yet, like them, they built huts and planted a few crops. For the rest they hunted and fished to sustain themselves; and seldom offered to do a harm to any white man unless goaded to it by injustice or violence.

Some of their little children had been persuaded to attend my uncle's school. And it was there that I as a child acquired what knowledge I possess of the Loups d'Orange. And never dreamed that this understanding of them ever could be of any service to me or to my country.

They were not a very dark-skinned people; and some among them seemed as light of skin as many of the Mohawks—or some French ladies I have seen—of a clear, amber tint, with rosy cheeks and glossy hair. Some believe there was French blood in them. The Loups deny it; and I do not know.

Well, my Uncle Absalom was doubtless a worthy and a holy man; and strict and stern as he was worthy. I know he meant only to be just. From the truly just, good Lord deliver us! . . . He birched us savagely, —me among the others. It was for our souls' redemption, he said. But I never heard that Christ struck little children.

Our food was, mostly, soupaan with salt or maple sugar; fish, and potatoes. We saw little meat save, rarely, salt pork or jerked venison. Wild game was our only fresh meat except a butcher's roast at Christmas.

In summer, porridge, and squash, peas, and beans in season; and some fruit,—mostly wild berries,—composed our diet, save for the fish we caught in the river. We

thrived, nevertheless, and learned to con our horn-books and were taught our catechisms and the rule of three on this lean diet. . . . But I have seen many a day since, and many a month, where I would give all I possessed for the dog-crumbs from my Uncle Absalom's table.

There were, at school, among other Loup children, two little brothers and their sister, all nearly my age. She was the only female in the school.

We white children found them to be good comrades and always welcomed them to our games. They were friendly and gay-hearted youngsters, skilful and daring in sports; always fair opponents and loyal allies.

During the years I spent at my uncle's school, these young Loups d'Orange were among my intimate cronies, and, indeed, were popular with us all, and respected, too, for they were not to be bullied or treated with contempt, but seemed fully aware of their rights and maintained them with dignity.

Their mother was dead. Their father, a convert, was neither a chief nor a sachem, but had been a shaman until baptised. His name, translated, meant "the masked one who drums." He died of smallpox. The elder boy's name was "The Gad-fly," in English.

His brother's name, freely translated, was "Ghost Snake," and meant the white and ghostly cast-skin which a serpent sloughs off in the grass or among rocks.

The little girl's name was "Witch Eyes," or "Gold Eyes," after the name of that wild duck which the Loups believe was once a witch, and which so rarely comes to us in Massachusetts Bay. Its plumage is precious to the Loups, and is used to decorate the shaman's witch-drum.

When we white children asked Witch Eyes why she had been so named, she told us that one of these wild ducks swam near in the Housatonic when her mother was washing her new-born baby; and from such incidents, usually, do the Loups d'Orange acquire their names. So it chanced that the new-born child was named from

the wild duck called *Witch Eye,* or, sometimes, *Gold Eye,* the plumage of which, no doubt, afterward decorated her father's witch-drum.

I seem to see those children now, Gadfly, Ghost Snake, and Witch Eyes, where we all played at Prisoner's Base or Red Lion after school; and there was nobody could run as swiftly as Witch Eyes; nobody who could double and dodge like Gadfly; no stealth to match the wary ambush laid by Ghost Snake to entrap his white rivals.

In almost every sport of dexterity and address these three children of the Loups d'Orange were our peers; in some our superiors.

In swimming nobody could catch Witch Eyes. Gadfly was the best marksman with bow and arrow. Ghost Snake always caught more fish than any three of us together, and choicer, too.

In playing at war-dance they were the tireless ones; they threw knife and hatchet with greater skill than we.

In trapping hare and rabbit and the wild poultry of the woods, none could equal them.

In ball playing, too, they excelled,—we playing the Indian game. But we white lads could run *further* without exhaustion; we were better at wrestling; at jumping from the broad mark; at climbing trees; at alley-taws, at jacks; at ball and cup. And in contriving such articles as boys fashion out of willow and soft pine with Barlow knives we were far more adroit.

Now, in the school-room, however, I am not sure that we white children learned as nimbly as did these little Loups d'Orange.

When they arrived they knew not one word of English, yet, within a month, chattered it most volubly; and e'er I saw the last o' them they spoke and read our English tongue to admiration, whilst I stammered only meanly their Loup dialect of the Delaware tongue.

As for their having attained any true comprehension

of the Gospels, or real understanding of Christianity, I am unable to say.

Their ignorant questions sometimes horrified and enraged my Uncle Absalom.

One day, after my uncle had been reading to us from the Bible, he bade Witch Eyes to arise and offer prayer. And the child stood up in her beaded fawn-skin, seeming a very seraph as she bent her head, *and signed her body with the cross!*

Then, lifting enraptured eyes to God, she clasped her hands; but, e'er her lips parted, my uncle, who had first turned white with the shock of so horrid a surprise, and then an angry red, strode toward her, birch quivering in his hand.

"What sign was that you made on your body with your hands!" he demanded in a harsh and unsteady voice.

"The cross," said she, surprised.

"And where did you learn that popish trick!" he continued sternly.

"Why," said she, "while I milked the cow by the pasture bars this morning, came two Black Robes who gave me God-bless-you in my people's tongue. So I offered a cup of fresh milk. And they kissed me and taught me a new prayer to Mary, Mother of Jesus; and showed me how to make this sign—"

"Jesuits!" he roared. "Idolatrous priests from Canada! You shall never dare again to make that popish sign! Do you hear me, Witch Eyes?"

"But," says she, her dark eyes very wide, "it was the cross—"

"You shall not make that sign!"

"But it was the *cross!*" she explained, bewildered.

"I forbid you!" cries my uncle, "—and further I forbid you ever again to say any prayer to the Virgin Mary! It is popery!"

"But it was a pretty prayer—" Tears choked her; she seated herself and laid her dark head in her arms.

I think my uncle had meant to birch her well. He glared at her but seemed undecided.

As for me, seeing that I was not noticed, and weary of the unkindnesses of religion, I attempted to catch a white butterfly which was fluttering on the glazed pane behind me. But my uncle saw me, and, being still red with wrath, birched me soundly so that never before, I think, had I ever received such a beating. God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.

That is one of my memories of childish school days in the country of the Loups d'Orange.

And I have another concerning Witch Eyes when she was a slim thing, nearly grown, of fifteen or thereabouts, and had been fitted for a teaching missionary among the women of her people—or so it was intended and supposed.

But we had been to church that day at Stockbridge, twice, and all evening at Bible reading and prayer in the school-room, and were weary. And my uncle seemed to have grown old and fierce and gaunt within the year, and had taken a cough and sometimes he spat blood upon the snow.

Something that Witch Eyes said displeased him—I have no recollection what it was—but he most harshly admonished her and warned her that eternal damnation was like to be her portion in the life to come.

Then I saw that the girl was angry, and there was defiance and scorn in her lifted head as she flung at him a taunt in her native tongue.

"What's that?" he roared, reaching for his birch.

"I tell you," she replied dauntlessly, "that your religion is not for us!"

"Not for you?" he thundered; "how dare you say it?"

"I say it," she retorted, "because I have considered it, and I now believe that your Jesus is not for us."

"You heathen slut!" he shouted, "what do you mean?"

"Reverend mister," said she, very pale and slim and straight, "I shall tell you what I mean. Your Heavenly Ruler you call God. We Loups, also, worship God; only we call him Holder of Heaven.

"But His son, Jesus, is not for us. He revealed Himself to the white man, not to the red man. He paid us no attention. We never heard of Him except through *you!* Therefore, it is plain that His business was with the white man, because He never concerned Himself about us—"

"What you say is blasphemous!" cried my uncle. "He died to redeem white and red alike!"

"He *died!*" flashed out the girl. "But it was you white men who murdered your Christ! No red man had any hand in it! He ought to send you all to hell for what you did to him!—"

Her voice choked and her eyes glistened with tears: "—If—He—had—had only come to *us,*" she faltered, "—no harm would have come to Him—"

At that, almost beside himself, my uncle grasped the birch and sprang to his feet; and saw two tall young Loups, her brothers, quietly range themselves beside their sister.

I got up, too, and said to my uncle: "She does not understand. She should be given time to reflect."

"Yes," he barked, "she'll be given eternity to reflect in—an eternity of hell—"

He seemed to struggle, clapped a hand to his face. There was blood on his mouth and chin, and he sank down on his chair, choking and coughing whilst we all stood at fearful gaze and in terror lest every spasm might be his end.

When I was seventeen I had been made ready to go to Harvard College; but so sick was I of religion that I did not wish to go there, but desired only my mother and my home and to become a farmer and till the fields.

That last summer at the Stockbridge school showed

all of us very plainly that my Uncle Absalom was already a dying man.

When I took leave of him I knew it, and was afraid of his bright and burning eye and his hollow, panting voice. We shook hands. He had meant only kindness.

The three young Loups d'Orange had left earlier in the spring, when their father, the old shaman, died o' the smallpox.

I never supposed that I was to set eyes upon them again, for, spite of their education, they had gone back to the wilds, and were known to be wearing the savage dress of their people again, and even to put on ceremonial paint and feathers at the Strawberry Dance, and little else beside, or so it was reported.

TYRANNY

SOME years ago—in 1750, I think—the foremost theologian of America, Jonathan Edwards, disgraced and exiled from his Northampton church, found a refuge among the Loups d'Orange not far from where I went to school.

Here he wrote his celebrated "Treatise on the Freedom of the Will"—in that remote wilderness where I sojourned through no free will of my own.

From that region he was called to Princeton College in New Jersey, to become its President.

To the Calvinistic aberrations of this theologist I owe the torments of my early youth. He was the source of all that plagued me; and out of such doctrines was he begot that hatched those gloomy tyrants of the human mind, Cotton and Increase Mather, John Cotton, Ezra Stiles, Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Dawson, and those surviving from that abortion called The Saybrook Platform; where bigotry had been married to intolerance, save for a premature seduction which tarnished both and littered New England with such works as *The Day of Doom,* Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted, Magnalia,* and that most infamous infliction upon childhood, *The New England Primer.*

My late uncle—he died in July of a flux—had been of the "Old Calvinists," and with a birch stick he had drummed God's wrath into us all. To him it was sinful for the unregenerate to pray at all; for they were heirs of damnation, since none but the elect were subjects for preaching or ordination,—or so he told us. God knows how the children felt in Moor's Indian Charity School, or what they thought in their secret minds of the white man who taught them the Shorter Catechism, the Apos-

tle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer,—who read to them *"Spiritual Milk for Babes Drawn out of the Breasts of Both Testaments,"* but who scraped the priestly symbol of the cross from all religious books and threatened those with everlasting hell who prayed to the blessed Virgin who begat our Lord and Master.

Faugh! The taste of the theologians' meat turned rancid in my mouth. And though I did truly desire education, and at Harvard College, too, I had no craving for it if it was to make of me a minister. But dared not say this to my father, though my mother knew it; and often I caught a glimpse of tears in her dear eyes, even when we had dared to laugh together—

For two years I remained at home, aiding my father, who needed me. Harvests had been bad and money scarce, and I was still very young, so there needed to be no haste about my college.

Also, affairs in Massachusetts Bay, and in Boston particularly, already were becoming ominous of a stormy future which, truly, was closer at hand than anybody dreamed. This was the evil aftermath of the notorious Stamp Act, imposed and repealed ten years earlier; and I had been a child of six and had no memory of it.

That there was a vast unrest in the land, and that it abated not but ever seemed to spread was plain to everybody.

My father thought it had its roots in modern godlessness; and he grew bitter against other creeds and sects whose churches, now, were invading our province everywhere when, in his youth, there had been scarce a house of worship save only of our own creed.

This set him by the ears, and he became more obstinate concerning my future vocation. And I, dismayed, seemed already to see the pulpit—where there was to be no "dumb reading" either, but learned comment and inspired exposition. . . . And I knew my lips never,

never could utter wrathful or cruel words, for which I had lost all reverence and all belief.

Though I dared not say it—scarce dared analyze and admit the fact—I seemed to have become a kind of pagan, or at least a heathen. For I was inclined to love all gods; any Christ, Roman or Protestant; the Christ of the Established Church as well as Him whom dissenters worship. His Virgin Mother, too, I loved and prayed to in secret; and felt inclined to love and worship all mild goddesses of a gentle mythology; and also God,—the Father alike of Jew and Gentile,—and the Holder of Heaven of the Loups d'Orange.

Men of all creeds, if kind, seemed good to me, and blessed, and safe from hell. I had no real repugnance to any form of worship where love was.

But I had a hatred, deep, increasing; and that hatred was for Fear in any form,—fear of God, fear of Kings, fear of hell or any other threat against the peace and tranquillity of the human mind.

It was Fear I hated more than anything; and next I hated those who inspired it. And thus came I, naturally but very slowly, by my hatred for that German King who, out of his pomp and plenty, grasped covetously at my country with his tyrant's hands, to wear it like a purchased bauble as he chose or, as he chose, to lock it in his treasure chest among his filthy gewgaws. . . .

Well, I am too early heated, and my narrative outstrips a quill which is scarcely trimmed and but newly wet with ink, and has only now begun to scratch.

I went to Cambridge to matriculate. I was a farmer's son, of no title, no quality, and my name was, in consequence, at the very bottom of the list. For when I went to Harvard the lists were not, as they are now, printed in alphabetical order, but a student's place on that list depended upon his quality and social consequence. And my name was printed last of all.

My antipathy for New England theology was now slowly becoming as stubborn as a Puritan's antipathy to

the symbol of the cross—as, in the earliest edition of *The New England Primer,* the couplet for the letter "J,"

"Sweet Jesus he
Died on the tree."

bore a picture of the cross; but the New England Puritan smelled popery, and the new edition,

"Christ crucified
For sinners died."

bore no crucifix.

So I contrariwise; for when I listened to discourse concerning the God of my own creed, I smelled bigotry, and desired to efface all sign and symbol of sect and creed from my belief in Him I worshipped.

Perhaps I was a budding Unitarian—or might have been shaped to resemble one. At all events I resented with increasing impatience the galling harness of any creed.

To become a missionary I could endure; and was buoyed up in the recollection that, among those of my father's sterner and simpler belief, no minister of my creed could remain a minister if he had no church and congregation. And it was not likely I could establish either among the Iroquois, or Huron, or Algonquin.

Before I matriculated my parents died. I loved my father and adored my mother. . . . And now I knew that it pleasured her that I should renounce the ministry. And I was very sure that there were those in Heaven who could persuade my father that my vocation lay not in pulpits nor in heathen camps; for every inclination led my steps to my own dear home and my own land,—which my father already termed the "glebe," using the former meaning of the term, so determined had he been to make of me a minister of the Gospel.

So, with economy and by doing chores and earning a little money otherwise in college, I matriculated; and

contented was I to doff cap and gown, say farewell to Cambridge and to my fellow students, and go to my humble home near Lexington.

It was too late for any crop save buckwheat. But Lord!—what I did eat that winter of cakes and syrup amazes me still when I think of it.

And the very first of all I did engage in a company of militia, and pledged myself further to the alarm company of that regiment, which was composed of volunteers who held themselves ready to turn out instantly at any alarm.

Parker was our captain, a farmer like myself. I had my father's rifle, powder-horn, a box of flints; a canister of bright priming powder, some bars of lead, a bullet mould, and nearly four pounds of powder, out of which I contrived a dozen cartridges against emergency.

Also, when at Harvard, I had joined a city company of Horse in Boston, which now, everybody knew, must soon be disbanded because the men were divided in political opinion and already bitterly suspicious of one another.

However, I turned out with my troop when it paraded, and carried the lance, bearing our colours, in my stirrup.

But Lord! how darkly the gathering regiments of British regulars in Boston did gaze upon us on parade; and God knows they had reason for their fleers and sneers and leers, and their open gibes and sullen misgiving concerning what part the half of our troop might play if ever it came to a choosing between King and country.

They had reason for their doubts of us, as I say, because, at that time, many among us were joining one or another of those secret clubs and societies, the object of which was to consult and take measures for resistance to the constantly increasing oppression of our King and his ministers and parliament, and the augmented numbers and growing insolence of the military which this same

King of ours was contriving to impose on us in our restless city of Boston.

Very often I saddled my horse, Trumpeter, and journeyed into Boston to foregather with Harvard friends or make new ones at the Farmers' Club, or attend a muster of my troop of Horse.

And here it was that first I met my sturdy comrade, Paul Revere.

AMERICA

OR

THE SACRIFICE

CHAPTER I

The Beleaguered City

SOME say that the British ships brought the black measles into Boston. I do not know. My mother, and then my father, sickened and died of it. And many others died.

Not only in Boston but in the adjacent country it had been a year of gloom;—dark skies, dark days of rain and sleet and cold; weeks of wet and bitter winds that pelted the captive city with snow and whitened the marshes, and covered fields and woods with a dusky silver pall.

In Cambridge, where the kindness of my father had permitted me an opportunity for education at Harvard College, the cold was desperate, and thick black fogs veiled marsh and river and town, so that candles burned redly; and students who could not afford them were put to it to read by the smoky flicker of pine knot or tallow dip.

Two wealthy students with dull and sluggish minds aided me to matriculate; for I read Greek and Latin and mathematics with them, and made out to tutor them to such a purpose that they had their degrees when I had mine; and it was the money I earned in this manner, and

by splitting wood and doing chores, that enabled me to remain in college after my parents' death.

Followed a strange year for me; and how to employ my education I did not know.

My home was in Lexington,—a small house, a barn, a horse named Trumpeter, two cows called Blythe and Janie, a few chickens, and a small acreage of fair farm land.

To eat and to clothe myself, while making up my mind how best to turn my education to account, made it necessary for me to continue in my father's steps.

He had been a plain, God-fearing, industrious farmer, who ploughed, sowed, reaped, and did his own milking, and who had neither slave nor servant nor any man at hire to aid him.

My mother did her part; and what we wore on our bodies was home spun. She made the soap we washed with, dipped the candles that lighted us, wove the carpet we trod on, prepared what we ate; and had leisure, too, for church and prayer, for quilting bee and fair, as well as for her kitchen garden, and her flowers, and for setting hens and ducks.

She was a pretty thing, my mother. . . . Our family God was that stern god of iron and leather whom my father's forebears called upon when they galloped into battle. Save for Him, I think my mother had been gay —for her light laughter came easily as a wild bird's trill in May—

Well, as I say, I was put to it to find some profitable use for my education, which had cost us all some pains.

In Boston I had a friend, one Paul Revere, a silversmith, now tolerably well known; and the beauty and exquisite delicacy of his silver work, and the moonlike lustre of his finished pieces stirred in me a desire to learn so beautiful a trade.

And again a desire to read law with some grave barrister assailed me. Also I considered the career of a teacher of youth. But came to no decision that sum-

mer and autumn of '74, but contrived to cultivate my farm, meaning, during the winter, to decide.

But, what with the increasing unrest in Boston, the plague of ministerial troops, the sinister and provocative attitude of their officers—of all King's people, civil and military—and the ever-growing danger of riot in Boston and of widespread revolt throughout Massachusetts Bay—why this seemed to be no time for me to fix upon any trade or profession to maintain me throughout my future life.

Also, that winter, I had opportunity for more unpaid employment than I could well manage. For, on a visit to Boston, I had become a member of one of the patriotic clubs—*The Farmers*—and my pen was constantly required in copying minutes, in correspondence with other secret and patriotic societies, in contriving broadsides, even in composing original addresses to be delivered by those in whose breasts burned the pure and sacred fire, but whose minds and fingers were unschooled and unskilled in expressing those lofty sentiments which animated their hearts.

To go into Boston it was necessary that I arrange with some neighbour to feed and water the live creatures dependent upon me. For recompense I engaged to do the like upon demand.

So, once a week, and sometimes oftener, I contrived to go to Boston. Where, also, I had enlisted in the city company of Royal Light Horse—it being believed in our club that the bulk of this company, and of one or two other battalions of Foot, would stand with *us,* and not with our royal Governor Gage, if so unhappy a necessity ever arose.

And I may say, now, that, though that sad necessity did presently arise, no uniformed militia company in Boston town ever embodied and marched in our cause; but all city soldiery, being partly of the one, partly of the other political complexion, angrily disbanded; and so ingloriously became as extinct as so many dodos when real

war came upon us. We had hoped to contrive otherwise; and so diligent was I in my attendance at drills and exercises that already I had become cornet in our troop of Horse before the trouble broke and ended all such soldiering for me for ever. Never again was I to wear scarlet jacket turned up with blue, or the insignia of any sovereign, or carry the flag of England in my stirrup-boot, or cheer for His Britannic Majesty when our fat Major, Portman, at our regimental mess, offered us—"Gentlemen, the King!"

No; and I remember hearing some troopers singing in the rear rank on that last day ever that we paraded:

> "Great Britain's King is fallen into dotage—
> A spectacle for honest folk and free:
> He barters Empire for a mess of potage,
> And sells his birthright for a dish of tea!"

How our Major Portman swore to hear it!—and cursed the jeering treason in our ranks; but nobody cared, for, already, we had notice to deliver up our colours at Province House—as had the Governor's own troop of Horse and, in fact, every city company in Boston, horse, foot, artillery, and train.

For now the end was already in sight, awaiting only April buds and dry roads.

But neither in our assemblies, committees, nor in our secret clubs did we await the coming of spring. Nor were our messengers to sister colonies deterred by ice and snow or the melting mud in rutty roads. Nenni! For twice I rode express to New York for the Committee of Correspondence; and once to Hartford for the Honble John Hancock. Once, also, I was away three whole weeks with packets for Mr. Patrick Henry and for Colonel Washington at Williamsburgh in Virginia, where, in their House of Burgesses, debate waxed hotter every day, and my *Lord Dunmore in his Palace grew

* His official residence in Williamsburgh was known as "The Palace." It was a medium sized building with two small wings and not imposing.

more sullen and more secret, brooding dark designs and hatching evil in that viewless crypt he called his mind.

Sometimes we rode relay to Charleston in South Carolina.

It was at a farmhouse between Boston and New York that my relay ended; and here I met another express who, when he had satisfied me, clapped spurs to his big hunter and was off, leaving my ears ringing with his cry: "God save our country!"

And so, relayed by rider after rider, my packets were rushed southward to add pepper to that devil's stew now all boiling over in his British Majesty's dominions of Virginia and the Carolinas.

Now, as an Express Rider, I may in all modesty flatter myself that I was esteemed reliable. It was to me that the packet was entrusted which announced to Virginia that our King had closed our port to trade.

I rode, of course, relay, and spared no horse. God! what a ride through the Jersies, and Delaware, and Maryland into Virginia. Never shall I forget the nervous suspense, the blinding fatigue of that headlong course, scarcely eating, scarcely sleeping at all, changing from horse to horse as though dazed, and not entirely conscious of the strange faces around me, or the voices, or whether it was day or night—high noon or lanthorn light that seared my swollen eyes.

So I galloped into Williamsburgh, Virginia's Capital, and passed the Palace with its two wings and knew it for the tyrant's den, and so, galloping through the street and shouting my warning cry: "Express ho! I pass! I pass!" drew bridle at the House of Burgesses which, I had learned, was in solemn session, and where were gathered at that hour all the rank, quality, fashion, and political big-wigs of Virginia.

Up to the portal I galloped, and God knows how I got out of my saddle or found legs to run, but found myself inside the great hall where the legislature was in

full session and the galleries crammed with ladies in their silk and perfumed powder.

Straight to the gate I hastened with my despatch pouch and made toward the Speaker where he sat on high under the canopy with the mace shining below him on the tribune rail.

Then a tip-staff caught hold of me and stopped me, and: "What are you about?" cries he in a horrified voice; "do you not see and hear that Mr. Patrick Henry is addressing the House?"

I told him that I had rid Express from Boston, but he forced me outside the rail and made me seat myself on a bench. "Rest you there, my saucy, young cock-o' the-walk!" says he, "and when gentlemen have finished there will be time enough for others to ask properly to be heard."

"You fat-head!" said I, fiercely, "must public business wait on quality?"

"Hold your tongue!" he whispered angrily; and all of a sudden I heard Mr. Patrick Henry's ringing voice dominate the sudden stirring in the hall which now became a vast confusion of murmuring,—movement, muttering, half-stifled protests, and a great stirring in the gallery. Suddenly a voice shouted, "treason!" A roar of "treason!" filled the hall.

Through it, like a sword-cut slashing through fog, came—flashing sharp that same steel-ringing voice: "If this be treason, make the most of it!"

Everywhere the Burgesses were on their feet, some cheering, some crying out in protest, and the Speaker pointing his fat finger at Mr. Henry and hammering with his gavel.

I seized that moment, shoved aside the tip-staves, and ran through the hall to the Speaker's tribune.

Before any could stop me I had pulled my packet from my despatch pouch and passed it up to the Speaker.

The sight of an Express invading their debate served to attract all eyes and silenced the noise and confusion.

I leaned against the tribune at the foot of the Speaker's desk, swept floor and gallery with a vague glance, and saw no face distinctly.

But presently, while the Speaker was reading my packet, something moved me to raise my eyes again. I saw a face,—only one face in all that throng. It was the face of Colonel Washington.

As those calm, grave eyes met mine, so strange, so profound, a thrill instantly possessed my heart that in the majesty of that quiet gaze, all fatigue, all confusion, all doubt seemed to clear away, and I straightened my drooping body and looked him level in the eyes,—knowing somehow that I was facing greatness of mind and heart and soul.

I could not take my gaze from him, only the Speaker's voice drew my attention away; and I was bidden to retire and wait outside the railing.

From there I could see and hear the Speaker as he communicated to the House the news of Boston's punishment and plight.

Then Mr. Justice Montague caught the Speaker's eye, and spoke very bitterly against all rebels, vowing that Boston now had its deserts.

Then—on my infuriated ears, broke the calm, clear voice of Colonel Washington, moderate, serene, calmly measured, offering to equip a thousand men at his own expense and lead them to the relief of Boston.

God, what a tumult broke out at that! And when Mr. Justice Montague would further speak, loud cries against him, so that he bowed very low and with perfect esteem and courtesy to Colonel Washington, then said very haughtily to those others who jeered him that he would not remain to listen to treason and be insulted.

So he took his laced hat and left his seat; halted; attempted to make himself heard once more.

At that moment, from the ladies' gallery, comes a great swishing of silk and tap of satin shoon descending the stairs,—and a young girl comes down two at a clip,

and in a very passion of resentment that her father, Mr. Justice Montague, should suffer insult in the House.

I offered her my bench to stand upon, and she sprang up on it scarce noticing me at all,—and all the while her fan went tapping the devil's tattoo on the rail, and I could hear her half-stifled exclamations of anger and indignation that a Montague should be so used.

"Madam," I ventured, "have a care or your fan will presently hit the wig of the gentleman in front of you."

"And if it does!" she returned, turning on me in all her flushed young beauty.

Her eyes encountered mine,—insolently noticed my dress.

"Oh," said she, "you are the Express who started all this hubbub among your betters!"

"Madam," said I, reddening, "your tongue uses Harvard College somewhat roughly." She had turned away to watch her father who was making heavy weather of his speech, but now she looked around at me: "Sir, does Harvard College confer the degree of Express Rider?"

"In my case,—yes, Madam."

"I ask your pardon."

"Granted, Madam, when you mistook"—I bowed—"your very humble and obedient—"

"Express!" shouted a tip-staff, cutting me short, but I finished my bow to this young and arrogant beauty, then went out across the floor to the Speaker's desk.

There I received and pouched the packet which the House had swiftly prepared in answer to Boston's message and cry for help.

I bowed to the Speaker, turned and bowed lower still to Colonel Washington—and that great man rose and rendered me very perfectly my bow.

Then I started for the door where my horse stood saddled; and as I hastened by her, I turned and looked at my youthful Virginian beauty, and met her eyes.

Off came my hat; there was the slightest flicker of

her eyelashes, the faintest hint of a curtsy. The next instant I was out of doors and riding north.

And, God help me, ride as hard as I might I could not outstrip or leave behind me the memory of that Virginian maiden's eyes.

I! whose every thought should centre only upon my unhappy Country!

Well, God help us all!—for we were, presently, to sup with a long spoon what we had cooked and so hotly seasoned. Aye—eight years e'er the pot was clean scraped of that devil's mess. And God knows the devil was our guest at that damned feast. At which surely we all must have died, spoon in hand, had we not entertained, also, an angel unawares—His Excellency!—

One thousand seven hundred and eighty-four years ago upon this day that I sit here a-writing of my memoirs, our Lord sent to this wicked world his only son begotten, to save us all from hell. And eight miraculous years ago, on a fair May day, God sent His Excellency to all friends to liberty so that freedom should not perish upon this earth.

Who, that is to-day living among the disciples of this Redeemer of man, doubts the divinity of his mission?

Who, even among the heathen, really doubts it now? Not even, perhaps, that sad and despoiled old King, whose mind is slowly, slowly darkening on his tarnished throne. May that same God,—so often called upon to "save the King"—pardon, and save him still e'er twilight clouds, and the last glimmer of reason expires to plunge his mind into eternal night!

If I speak impiously, I mean it not; if I speak bitterly —well—I have looked upon such things as never I believed could be outside of hell.

Now it chanced, one wintry day in early March, that I lay the night in Boston,—I having been invited to address a secret meeting of the Mechanics' Club. And had done so, being kindly encouraged by Mr. Hancock and Dr. Warren; and had writ my speech and got it by

heart, and so spoke it without reading—having it both by heart and *at* heart, and so passionately that, when the hour came, I was unafraid and all afire, and so hampered somewhat in eloquence by emotion.

It is not well to feel too deeply when addressing others. Passion should be spent in the composing of the address; and, in the delivery, emotion kept well controlled to evoke it in others.

But I was raw and young and full o' flames as a Franklin stove—and smoked like one, too, I fear, annoying and suffocating where I meant only to hearten and heat.

Well, all were kind to my inexperience, and indulgent to my youth. And later, listening to several of our masters of oratory, I did learn lessons immortal when Mr. Hancock spoke, and when our Dr. Warren followed him with God's own clarity of word and thought, and a calm and gracious tenderness that left eyes wet and throats tight.

Boston had already begun to starve. Nobody, rich or poor, in the city, now, was entirely free from that subtle unease which the mind and body engenders when food for both not only becomes scarce in quantity but also no longer satisfies in quality.

The sea was forbidden us by our King, either for trade or for food. Our trade, otherwise, was cut off; our reserve of provisions had become inadequate and was growing dearer every day.

There was no work to be had on the wharves, none in the warehouses, none even in the city. Carpenters, shipwrights, masons, iron-workers, painters, plasterers, all these were idle. Many shops had closed.

Work, indeed, was offered to our poor mechanics who sat hungry and shivering in fireless garrets where wife and children lay on the floor in rags for warmth: but the labour offered was work on the new British barracks to be built for those new British regiments expected presently from England; and our wretched,

starving workmen refused the double and triple wages offered, proudly preferring starvation and a clean conscience,—the only cleanliness now left them in their misery and destitution.

Well, after the meeting at the Mechanics' Club, I went with Paul Revere to his shop where I was to lodge that night, he having a trundle bed for such itinerant patriots who lived too far from the city to return at night.

We had a dish of salt pork and apples, and bread and cheese and a mug of good ale from a nearby tavern.

And after that Paul smoked his long clay and I admired the silver set he was making for Mr. Hancock, it being a silver tray and a chocolate pot, a pot for coffee, an urn, an ewer, a jug for milk, and a slop-bowl,—all beautiful and chastely graceful in design in the Grecian or Georgian manner, so he said.

But mostly I did admire three silver porringers which he had made for the three children of a wealthy gentleman in Philadelphia; and I think his name was Norris, and he was a Quaker.

Also, the plates that Paul engraved on copper interested me, and I was sorry he never had learned to draw correctly because, otherwise, his scenes seemed spirited, and he was at considerable pains to render them with accuracy—such as the picture of Harvard College which, however, he engraved only but did not draw.

Now, Paul had a friend, one William Dawes, who sometimes rode express for our Committee of Correspondence; and he had arrived that day in Boston from a long journey out of Virginia.

Doubtless he had been detained by the Committee sitting, as customary, in their chamber in Faneuil Hall, but Paul had had word that he would visit him this evening in his silversmith's shop and would drink a mug of flip with us.

So, against his coming, we brewed a noggin, and laid

out a new clay pipe and tobacco, and a dish of apples and cheese and a toasting fork, meaning to be merry within respectable bounds.

While waiting, and not over given to patience—perhaps because I did not smoke and so soothe the dragging minutes as did Paul—I examined the portfolio of prints that this talented and versatile man had made, such as his hand-coloured engraving of The Boston Massacre, and the View of Harvard College, and another View of Boston Harbour, and another of the Landing of the British. Also, among these were many of his caricatures and cartoons done in the manner of Hogarth, and some fine book-plates, and a number of very beautiful designs for gold and silver work—for he was a goldsmith, too.

And not only did he do expert chasing and engraving on the lovely gold and silver objects which he had contrived, but designed and made gold jewellery upon request, such as necklaces and bracelets, lockets, medals, rings, and seals—and even knee and shoe buckles and spectacle bows.

I think, take him all in all, that Paul Revere was one of the finest and most talented men that ever I knew.

He was a superb horseman. He had been a soldier, and, when no older than I, had been promoted to lieutenant of artillery; and he served against the French at Crown Point, and at Lake George.

He was double my age—a well-built, powerful, fiery man of forty, who seemed to me no older than I, so virile, so brisk and lithe and ardent was he. Yet he had been married and a widower, and had eight children, and now a new wife—to breed more youngsters, perhaps.

Paul, his eldest son, was a fine lad; and so were the others, too—all fine children.

Yet this man of forty and of much experience seemed a very boy to me, and made of me a comrade to laugh with, jest with, dare with—a friend with whom to discuss all things worthy or light, grave or beautiful. I

loved Paul Revere. And so, I think, did every soul who knew him.

Now, as we sat there awaiting Will Dawes, the French blood singing in Paul's veins made him gay and presently set his lips a-singing, too—old school songs and ballads he learned at the old North Grammar School—probably not of Tileston, his celebrated master—and older songs still that he had no doubt from his French father, the Huguenot goldsmith of Guernsey.

But Paul's mother's name was Deborah Hichborn, and there was no levity on that side; so, in him, the Gaul was ever chastened by the Puritan, which made of this man a personality entirely charming.

I know not why, in these my memoirs, I give so much space to this man who, afterward, played so slight a part in my life, or, in fact, in the great war for liberty.

Yet, perhaps some day in years to come his genius as an artist and a craftsman will be recognized. For, God grant he still has many years to live, because he desires to cast cannon and bells and fashion chimes and build ships and design statues and create vast business enterprises. . . .

Perhaps, in years to come, some historian or, better still, some poet will write of this American Benvenuto. Were I a poet I would do so. Alas, I have reason to know I am no poet!—But of that sad fact, and of the reason of it, later; for it is the most vital part of this my story—vital, I mean, to my happiness and my peace of mind,—but, to my country, a matter of no moment.

Now, as Will Dawes still tarried, Paul became restless, and went frequently to the window and door to spy if he might discover his comrade on the way to join us.

In Boston we were a city of clubs and of British troops.

There, first of all, was our first Provincial Congress, of which Mr. Hancock was president; and they had sat at Salem, at Concord, and at Cambridge.

Through this Congress was organized, as well as

might be, the military machine of the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

Also they appointed the Committee of Safety with its plenary military powers, whose nine members were in close consultation with the five members of the Committee of Supplies.

And now it was becoming a question concerning another Committee of one or two men delegated to approach the Indians of the Loup d'Orange, sometimes called Stockbridge Indians, with a view to secure their services as scouts in the event of war.

Paul thought that I should be appointed on this Committee, and so informed Mr. Hancock,—and this was because I had been sent to school in the neighbourhood of their village, when a boy, and, being quick to learn, and acquisitive of foreign tongues, had picked up something of their dialect when roving about with Loup children, or fishing and hunting and playing games in their company after school.

But, so far, no such Committee had been appointed, and my activities at home continued to be agricultural, and, in Boston, were confined to my troop of Horse and the Farmers' Club, and an occasional address elsewhere.

In Boston, at that time, perhaps the most important club was The Mechanics'. There were many others,—nearly all secret,—such as the North End, South End, Middle District Caucus, the Long Room Club, and others, too tedious to enumerate—but all subsidiary to The Sons of Liberty, of which Paul was a distinguished member.

And the mission of all these clubs was to work, wait, and *watch*.

God knows we had plenty to watch in the activities of spies and patrols and the going and coming of all these swarms of officers, military and civil, who were afoot and running about the captive city at all hours of the day and night.

For, in Boston at that time, were more than four

thousand British soldiers, and others expected. There was the King's Own, the 5th, 10th, 17th, part of the 18th, 22nd, 23rd, 38th, 43rd, 44th, 47th, 52nd, 59th, 63rd, 64th, regiments of Foot; eight companies of artillery; eight of the handsome Major Pitcairn's marines, distributed on the Common, on Fort Hill, the Neck, Castle barracks, and in King Street. And Lord! how they ran and dodged about all day, all night, so that we were at pains to keep track of them and watch that they meditated no mischief toward our leaders or to our stores which we had gathered and hidden against military emergency.

As for our uniformed city companies in Boston, they, as I say, were partly King's people and partly of our own political creed, and were suspected, as military corps, both by our asinine Governor Gage and by our Provincial Congress.

These troops were brilliantly uniformed, and imposing to gaze upon, but, if mustered in a crisis, must have made but a bewildered brigade. As ancient Pistol has it —"Under which King (flag?) Bezonian?"—(Bostonian?)

These troops were, in order of importance, The Governor's Troop of Horse Guards; the Royal Light Horse in which I was a cornet; the Artillery, Capt. Bell; the Boston Regiment, Col. Erving; the Grenadiers, Major Dawes; the Train attached to the Boston Regt., Paddock, Capt.; the Train of the First Suffolk Regt., Capt. Robinson; 2nd Suffolk Train, Barker, Capt.; 3rd Suffolk, Pond, Capt.; Green's and Barber's companies at the North and South Batteries; and the Cadets, from whom Governor Gage had not only taken their colours but also dismissed their captain, upon whose handsome head he also presently set a price. No wonder; for their commander had been Mr. Hancock; and Thomas Gage no longer loved him.

Well, toward midnight appeared a messenger with the reason for the non-arrival of Will Dawes, for, it

appeared, the Committee was still sitting in secret séance, and matters of gravest moment concerning the safety of our hidden military stores at Concord were being discussed, and secret measures already were being taken to secure them against the predatory prowling of the myrmidons of Thomas Gage.

So Paul and I disposed of our cheese and apples, and drank a tankard of ale, and set away the noggin in a cold crock to await a more propitious moment.

And so, wondering and uneasy, we went to bed. And I to—lie awake and think—as now I always did of that Virginian girl in Williamsburgh. For, poor fool that I was, she so constantly occupied my thoughts that many and many a night I could not sleep at all for thinking on her.

CHAPTER II

Express!

I HAD laid me on my trundle bed in the shop, without removing more than my boots and coat, meaning to rise before dawn and ride to my home in Lexington.

I had cupped the candle and had laid me down as I say, to think of that Virginia girl, and I so remained wakeful, and my eyes would not remain closed.

From where I lay I could see the diamond panes of Paul's shop window lighted to a faint golden tint by a lanthorn which hung outside above the street door—it being British military law that a whole candle light must burn before every third house in Boston.

Now, as I lay there thinking of that maid, and gazing at the glimmer on the shop window, I saw, in the dim lanthorn light outside, three shadowy forms come from an alley across the street, pause by our shop window, and, pressing noses to the diamond panes, peer into the darkened room where I lay snug.

They could not see me; I was aware of that; but I could see them clearly enough to perceive their British uniforms,—a lieutenant of dragoons and two troopers in their leather helmets.

Anger slowly possessed me at their so insolent contempt for privacy, and that this sneaking patrol should so basely demean their own uniform by this contemptible spying. But these were not my premises which they so grossly insulted; and I would not lightly involve Paul by any protest of mine, who already was monstrously suspected at Province House; and so swallowed my wrath and disgust and lay very still to observe them what they were about.

Sometimes, flattening their faces against the pane, they rolled their eyes and twisted their necks in vain effort to make out what might be concealed within; and sometimes they moved back to the street and stood gazing up at the floor above, where I could hear Paul snoring.

"Damned lobster-backs," I thought, "where are your horses, and what dirty business brings you here from your rounds through Milk Street?"—never dreaming that it was *I* myself they were investigating.

But see to what a petty and abhorrent rôle the British soldier was doomed by orders from our fat-head Governor! For I had left my horse, Trumpeter, in a stable on Milk Street; and afterward I learned that one of the grooms, a tory, had sneaked after me to Paul's shop, and had informed the patrol that a stranger was visiting the notorious Mr. Revere.

Well, they hung about for twenty minutes or more, but had no authority to enter, and no complaint to prefer, seeing that the lanthorn burned according to law.

So presently one of the troopers went away, and very soon returned leading three horses whose iron-shod hoofs rang out sharply in the silence. So they got them to horse and rode away; and I ran to the window and made out their dim shapes moving into Cornhill.

It was not worth awaking Paul, nor did this petty business greatly disturb me, for, since the affair of Fort William-and-Mary, our fat-head Governor had set his spies to watching Paul, and also everybody with whom he held commerce. But Paul Revere knew well enough how to care for himself and also for those who placed their trust in him.

I do not know whether I slept; I can not recollect sleeping, but seemed suddenly to be aware that somebody was tapping lightly and persistently upon the shop window.

The tune he drummed on the diamond panes was a signal—a measure known as the "Mason's tatoo,"—so I got me out o' bed again and went nearer to spy out whom

it might be; and discovered Will Dawes in spurred boots and caped surtout.

He was laughing to himself when, candle in hand, I let him in at the street door and then bolted it.

Said he: "There's a hell's brood o' British out to-night, and if one patrol has stopped me, so have a baker's dozen. And I know not why, either, but I think they are preparing to march out again, and so fear they may be spied upon and that their expedition come to naught."

He came into the shop and seated himself, and I fetched wood for the hearth fire and stirred the ashes to burn brightly, and set the noggin upon the coals.

Bread and cheese he desired, and a jack of ale, so these I fetched, and laid his pipe ready and tobacco, too.

"Lord," said he, "I was put to it to get me here without a rag-tag o' red-coats at my heels. I have journeyed in a circle, from Orange through Winter Street to the Mall, and so to Treamount and by Hanover, Middle and Lynn, back by Scarlet's Wharf into Fish Street, and so to Queen—and a patrol in every square and alley and lane!—even Mr. Pitcairn's marines pounced upon me to know my name and business and why I walked abroad in this once free town o' Boston!" . . . He scowled, pulled at his leather jack, then again smiled on me:

"Is Paul abed?"

"Yes, since midnight."

"Let him sleep. There's a small todo at the Committee where rumours are rife that the garrison is to march. . . . I see no sign of so alarming an attempt. And I have more confidence in our alarm companies than have many gentlemen on that Committee."

"Why is the Committee alarmed?" I inquired, lifting the simmering, spiced spirits from the coals.

"Well, then," says he, "do you remember in February that two disguised British officers were discovered spying on us at Worcester?"

I nodded.

"That has happened again," said he; "—the same

two officers, wearing citizen's dress—brown surtouts and red neck-cloths.

"They have been out again making maps and notes describing roads, rivers, hills, sites for camps, spots capable of fortification. Also they make cautious inquiry concerning forage and provisions available; and it is feared that they may have discovered the hiding places of some of our military stores. . . . Now you understand why the Committee is all of a twitter, and sending messengers and expresses right and left."

"Where did these two officers go?" I asked sullenly.

"Why, they were in Roxbury and Brookline, and baited at the tavern in Weston. Then they continued through Sudbury and into Concord by the South Bridge, where some damned tory entertained them. . . . Well, they deceived nobody by their disguises. And if they suspect we have gathered war material, that is one thing; but to march out to take or destroy what is the property of this province—that is another matter, Nathan, and is like to be a serious one for them."

"Yes," said I gravely, "what is lawfully ours we may lawfully defend."

"Bayonets, not pens, write out laws for us these days," he said thickly, his mouth full of bread and cheese. "Think of what Englishmen have done to us English!—that, accused, we may not be tried by our peers and upon the spot where our alleged offences are supposed to have been committed. No! But we are to be arrested and put aboard ships and taken to England and there tried! Did ever any freeborn Englishman, either here or in England, suppose that such an outrage could menace the rights we inherited from English forbears?"

He went on eating his supper, and, for a while, I said nothing but sat in silence considering how all this was to end. It seemed so monstrous strange to me; and we had loved England and the English and England's King. Nowhere in all the King's dominions had loyalty

been more pure, more natural, or warmer, than among us Englishmen whom they called colonials and Americans, and, among whom, England ever had been spoken of as "home."

I think, perhaps, among us there was a tenderness for England unknown among those who lived there, and that it came from our very isolation, and that the vast distance made dearer the Motherland to us.

How they could so have used us, God alone knows, to turn our love to bitterness, our loyalty to suspicion, our hope to despair, and our duty to rebellion.

"Will," said I, "you came from Virginia. How is it with us there?"

"Well," said he, "Patrick Henry sets them all by the ears."

"And Murray, Earl of Dunmore?"

"The Royal Governor sulks. But he is a secret man, my Lord Dunmore, and turns a bland face to the quality. But concerning what he hatches none can be certain. Some say he hath a monstrous plan to arm the blacks. But that is hell's work, or sheer lunacy."

"Yet," said I, "he and Dr. Connolly deceived and deluded Cresap with purpose to set the Indians against us. That also was devil's work."

"Yes," said he, "it was an evil business."

"And a bloody one; and like to be bloodier one day. Look what his agent, Greathouse, did to Logan's helpless children? Do you suppose Logan ever will forego an Indian revenge?"*

"No," said Dawes; "and, as you mention Indians, what has been done by your Committee to secure the Loups?"

"The Loups d'Orange?"

"Yes."

"Nothing that I know," said I.

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* As a matter of fact, Logan took more than thirty scalps to settle his score against the white man, whose friend he once and so notoriously had been.—AUTHOR.

"I thought you were to be sent to the Housatonic."

"I have not been sent."

After a silence: "I saw Colonel Washington," said I, "when I was in Williamsburgh last. Did you see him, Will?"

"I did."

"Oh," said I, "what manner of man do you take him to be?"

"Six feet and superb. . . . Until I set eyes on him I never dreamed we bred demi-gods in America."

"Yes, he has calm and majestic features."

"Kind yet unsmiling. Benevolent yet placid, and full of very gentle majesty. . . . They say he smiles rarely, and few ever have heard him laugh. Yet his mere presence spreads confidence, content, and a sort of happy security."

I smiled: "You also seem to make him out a very god," said I.

"No, not that. He seems entirely human, yet, at moments, like a man whose fine humanity of body is but a familiar cloak that conceals some god within. . . . You laugh, Nathan? Well, you also have felt his magic."

"It seems that Colonel Washington has conquered you also, at a glance."

"Sure I am his, body and soul. . . . Dunmore fawns on him and flatters, and has him to dine. Yet he must know in his secret, furtive soul, that this man, one day, shall stand against him. . . . And that Virginia will follow. . . . Braddock glimpsed the god in him too late. New York knows little of him; New England less. . . . Well, God's will be done; but I think it will be done by Colonel Washington some day."

"As rare a man as that, Will?"

"I answer you, only; remember his face, Nathan! . . . And lately, riding at sunset by Mount Vernon, which is his seat, I saw him standing on a little hill that overlooks the river and the lovely valley of Virginia.

"There were others on the lawn—gentlemen and ladies—a fair young girl near him, and others—I know not—for I looked only upon that calm, commanding figure which stood with noble head inclined, gazing out over that golden valley in Virginia, where all he loved lay spread away to the far horizon. . . .

"What were his thoughts? Was he considering what war might mean to all he loved?—to that peaceful land where, like a jewel, the river wound under a sunset sky? . . .

"He stood apart, not stirring. And, as he stood so, I saw a little negro child draw near him, unafraid—some slave's child that leaned quite fearlessly against his knee. . . . And I saw *his* hand, lightly, absently, rest in caress upon that lowly head." . . .

Deep, deep within me I was sensible of the same strange thrill—the sort of blind, exultant premonition that assailed me when in the House of Burgesses, I looked this Colonel Washington in the eyes!

The next instant I sprang to my feet and smothered the candle as the street echoed with the swift clatter of British cavalry.

CHAPTER III

A Phantom

IT chanced on a day late in March and near to sunset, I was leaving Boston on business of Mr. Hancock; and, near to that distinguished gentleman's wharf I saw some British Soldiers had stopped a hay-wagon which a man I knew was driving. Without considering what I did I drew near and spoke to this man who was a friend of mine and who sat on his load o' screwed hay while the Soldiers pulled the bales about and thrust their bayonets into them.

And just as I spoke to my friend, inquiring what was the matter, one of the soldiers bawls out that he has discovered a barrel of gun-powder in one of the bales.

At that they seized his horses; four soldiers climbed up on the load beside my friend; one snatched the reins. "Now you damned rebel," says a sergeant, "you shall smell what a jail is like! And I hope it will teach your friends never to attempt to smuggle arms and ammunition out o' Boston!"

My friend said nothing, but had turned very pale. As for me, unable to help him, I thought it better to slip away and attend to Mr. Hancock's business. And was going, when a soldier stops me with bayonet presented; a dozen of his fellows surround me.

"Not yet, my fine lad," sneered their sergeant.

"Well," said I, "what have I done to offend British Military law in Boston?"

"It's enough that you spoke to yonder rebel smuggler. Come, march!"

"Whither?" I demanded.

"Well, damn your eyes, you'll know that, too, when you arrive!" he retorted.

They had conducted me some distance when I began to understand they were taking me to Province House.

Fortunately I had upon my person nothing to incriminate me, which was God's mercy; for the message to the Reverend Mr. Clark that I bore was verbal.

Well, the red-coats marched me through Boston Streets, and I noticed many sorrowful faces turned to look at me and watch my progress; and many jeering faces, too, when we passed patrols, or barracks where British soldiers lounged on the sidewalk.

Into Province House they carried me where red-coat sentries stood guard around all the rich magnificence of gilded woodwork, silk hangings, and polished floors.

As we passed a stairway I saw a young girl descending. Her calm but curious glance encountered mine. Instantly I knew her and felt my heart leap; and the hot colour stung my face.

My youthful Virginian beauty of the House of Burgesses knew me, too; for I saw her startled eyes widen, and then a faint but lovely tint come over her countenance.

All this happened in an instant; and then I passed on quickly into an ante-room where another sentry stood.

Here my guards halted me. An orderly came; went away. There was whispering; a short interval of suspense; then the orderly returned and conducted me into a large and beautiful room where officers were seated all ablaze with scarlet and gold.

I recognized Governor Gage who cast an inquisitive but somewhat mild gaze upon me.

"Well, young man," said he, "who are you?"

I told him respectfully; and further replied to all his questions concerning my residence and business.

He seemed much bored; quizzed me carelessly; then, said he; "There seems to be nothing against this young man save only that he spoke very frankly to a smuggler

of gun-powder. He says he did not know that there was powder in the hay. There is nothing to prove that he did know. Set him at liberty."

I bowed to the Royal Governor. "See that you keep out of mischief," he said, not unkindly.

I was conducted to the ante-room. There two sentries took charge of me and escorted me through the beautiful house.

My heart was beating very fast when we again came to the staircase. And suddenly—O Heaven!—I saw her!

She came from a corridor, lightly, carelessly, her path crossing ours. And when she looked up and seemed to notice us for the first time; "La!" says she, demurely, "is there then no spot in this house free o' the plague of soldiers! Who is this young man and why do you escort him?"

"To free him, my lady," said one of my guards.

"Free him? Of what, then, was he accused unjustly?"

"Of nothing, my lady."

"Well then," says she, tartly, "let him leave this house as freely as any innocent man should!"

"Mistress Montague—"

"Are you answering me?" she demanded haughtily.

"No, my lady—"

"Very well, retire to the guard's quarters."

They went. And when those two soldiers had disappeared; "Sir," said she coldly, "are you still a rebel to your King?"

"Yes, madam."

"Do you—remember me?"

Suddenly so hot an emotion choked me that I could not speak; but with the flushed heat of my face I made a reply that stirred a sudden and deeper colouring in her cheeks.

She gazed at me in an odd, startled way,—made as though to speak, but found no voice, or so it seemed.—

for she turned, abruptly, and stood with lowered head, and one lovely little hand resting upon the bannisters.

I know not how I found my speech,—yet could not command it when found,—and it was a confused and unconsidered and passionate tongue that voiced the wild tumult in my heart and mind, and nigh choked my stumbling words:

—"Since—since I first laid eyes on you," I stammered, "I have known no peace of mind; no—no rest—no rest for mind or heart. . . . Since that day in Virginia. . . . Always, always you are in my thoughts. Your image is no sweet phantom to the eyes of my mind!—I know your every feature—your blue eyes, your delicate face and throat—and in what heavenly fashion your mouth is fashioned!—and the slim, soft hands of you—and the grace—the—"

"Sir!" she broke out breathlessly—"This is utter madness! You shall instantly compose yourself. What—what opinion can you entertain of me if I should listen—"

A languid, affected voice broke in from the adjoining room; and "Nancy! Nancy! Where the devil are you?" cried some young man invisible as yet, but I heard his pumps on the polished floor.

"My brother!" she whispers. "Good-bye!"

"Miss Montague—"

She turned her back on me and ran toward the corridor. As she entered it she turned, cast a swift, odd look at me, and vanished. And so I made my way out of Province House and down the path to the street, and so into the City, and with scarce wit enough in my disordered mind to find my way out of Boston.

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Butler

THE end of March—and a plague of red-coats!—drumming and fifing all over Boston, and running about the countryside. Now it was a regiment marched out with its music and colours on one of Tom Gage's famous "practice marches," officers and men sulky and insolent—sometimes mischievous—pushing over stone walls along their route, out of devilment.

Once a battalion marched to Marshfield, but did no damage; again a regiment of Foot made themselves and their Colonel, Leslie, ridiculous by the Sunday Salem expedition. But, so far, only on Quarry Hill had they done us any considerable injury; for there they had coolly robbed the Province of 250 half-barrels of gunpowder. Their Colonel, Maddison, missed our Suffolk regiment's cannon, though the detachment sent to Cambridge discovered two regimental field-pieces and dragged them off in triumph to Castle William.

Already, early in March, our spies from The Green Dragon Club informed us that the ministerial troops were determined to sweep our Province clean of all arms, ammunition, and supplies which we, within our rights, had gathered, paid for, and concealed against necessity. Particularly the Green Dragon warned us to watch our stores at Lexington, Concord and Worcester.

To what a sad and despicable condition had we been brought by this German King of England, who pretended to rule us for our own safety and advantage!

This is what came of those two infamous acts of Parliament, which repealed the charter of Massachusetts

Bay, forbade public meetings, invaded trial by jury, and laid a tyrant's grasp upon the ermine.

From the passage of those two vile acts the question of taxation was forgotten in the universal astonishment and anger that we freemen of Massachusetts were required by law of Parliament to become British slaves.

And it was this act of brutal despotism that resulted in that secret and most momentous meeting of the Suffolk Committee, with committees from Essex, Middlesex, and Worcester, on the 27th of last August.

It was the first real call to arms, the first appeal for national unity, the first serious defiance of the civil and military power of England.

The result was apparent already in the first feverish, bewildered awakening of Americans to a consciousness of continental nationality.

Well, here it was the end of March; and snow melting everywhere save a few patches in woodlands where already maple sap flowed and the haunting fragrance of arbutus filled sunny, leafless glades.

Lord, but I was contented that the black winter seemed done and ended, and that all signs indicated an early spring; for wild geese had long since passed over; woodcock were already nesting in alder swales; the first robins ran about wet meadows and along the edge of melting snows; and the horned-larks had winged northward.

Now a strange affair happened in my life, which was another of those same links I spoke of in that chain of chance and fate to which my life and destiny were being welded.

So near may two people, destined for each other, pass each other upon their paths through life, seemingly fated never to meet; and journey on all unconscious of each other, toward their far and separate destinations.

And one may even hear of the other, and pay scant heed, nor dream for a single instant that it signifies aught other than idlest gossip of a sunny hour.

And thus it happened on a sunny day in March, whilst I was shelling corn in my barn, and the doors wide to the warmth of the morning sun.

So, I being busy and content, fell a-whistling and singing of that Salem song they made concerning Colonel Leslie's clowning:

"——Through Salem straight without delay
The Bold Battalion took its way;
Marched to the Bridge, in open sight,
Of several Yankees armed for fight;
Then without loss of time or men
To Boston Town marched back again!

Chorus

"Long may such expeditions thrive!
Who runs away gets home alive!
Sing, Yankees, while your church bells ring
In praise of Leslie, and Our King!"

So, now songful, now whistling, I sat in the pleasant barn a-shelling of my corn, when there came a trample of hoofs on the sod without, and, looking up, I did see Will Dawes get out of his saddle and, leaving his nag standing, come to seek me in the barn.

He bade me good morning in a serious voice; and that, and his grave demeanour, sobered my gaiety somewhat.

"Have you come twelve miles to help a neighbour shell his corn?" said I, smiling to conceal concern.

But he seated himself on a sack o' meal and lost no time in coming about the business that fetched him to my house.

"Nathan," said he, "you were a pupil in that Injun school on the Housatonic, were you not?"

"They know all that at the Committee," said I.

"You understand their lingo?"

"I have forgotten it, I fear."

"What are they; Iroquois?"

"No; a subject race. Algonquin."

"What is it these Stockbridge Injuns call themselves?"

"Loup d'Orange."

"Ah," says he, "that's the outlandish name I heard. Well, now, you shall listen; for I have been in Province House and have news for you and for the Committee."

"*You* in Province House?" I exclaimed, instantly thinking of my Virginian maid.

"Yes, damme, like any other spy, save that I risked no more than jail or a sound beating with belt and ramrod."

"And none suspected you?"

"Ho!" says he, "there is a Green Dragon lad—young Holt—who some time since has taken service there—one o' their powdered flunkeys; and sometimes, when he has news of any mischief afoot, I change my homespun for his livery, that's all.

"Well, then, yesterday he sent me word by a sure person—the little laundress on Frog's Lane—and this is the news he sent me:"

He fished out a little book in which he had written what follows:

"Item: In the Northland in New York Province an Injun council was lately holden somewhere in the woods to the north of Guy Park. That Colonel Guy Johnson, who, since Sir William's death, is become superintendent for Injun affairs in North America, was present, they say, with his deputies, Colonels Claus, Croghan, and John Butler—though I doubt all these gentlemen were present: but Donald McDonald was there.

"Item: That the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy were present—the Senecas and Mohawks in great bodies; and fewer Cayugas and Onondagas; and only one Tuscarora chief—that nation being permitted no sachems at any council fire—and, lastly, not a single Oneida.

"But there were, they say, one or two Wyandottes, and some Praying Injuns—"

He fished out a lump of spruce from his pocket, cracked it in his teeth, chewed it gravely; continued:

"Here's their bloody plot with every link in it from Lord George Germaine in London down to that dirty Seneca, Hiakatoo:

"Item: Lord George sends to Tommy Gage instructions that he sound Guy Johnson regarding a British alliance with the savages.

"Item: Guy Johnson secretly summons the Six Nations; and all agree to help our King murder us excepting only the Tuscaroras and Oneidas, who remain aloof.

"Item: Young Walter Butler, a militia captain, a lawyer, one o' the rabid royalists of Tryon County, and son to Colonel John Butler, turns violent and breaks loose at the council, and offers to raise a corps of savages and tories to harry the frontier.

"Item: Guy Johnson sends young Butler to Boston to inform Gage that the Iroquois are available; and further commissions Butler to gain, secretly, what he can of allies among our New England savages.

"Item: Sir John Johnson is to break his parole and flee to Canada, and there raise a corps of refugees, savages, and Canadians against us.

"Item: And in order that this delicate matter of stirring up the Canadians be accomplished with every diplomacy and colour of law, Gage has sent to Virginia for some tory big-wig magistrate, whose name I could not learn, but who has already arrived at Province House on his way to advise Carleton and Haldimand in Quebec."

He studied his little book for another moment, pocketed it, looked up at me:

"What do you think of this kettle of fish?" he inquired, chewing vigorously on his spruce.

I said I thought it too barbarous and fantastic a tale to be true.

"It's true enough," he said indifferently. "Our King means to let loose the savages on us—red-skins and red-coats!—a holy alliance, is it not, Nathan?"

Wrath, incredulity, disgust, left me silent.

He said: "I powdered my hair and wore Holt's livery last night; and I waited at table behind Walter Butler's chair; and afterward, when they walked a minuet in the ballroom, I stood like a statue by the wainscot; and at supper I ran about with wine and ices and syllabubs; and in the cloak-room I picked pockets."

"What?"

"Surely. I sent a batch of Tory papers to the Committee. One or two love notes and such missives I burned out o' decency, they being but pretty gallantries and concealing no politics."

"Was it gay at Province House?" I asked wistfully.

"A charming spectacle! A bower o' beauty, what with the ladies in their laces, silks and powder, and dazzling all with their multitude of jewels; and all the officers in their gold and scarlet, and others in satin, silk, and sashes. . . . Aye, it was a goodly sight. . . . Tom Gage hath two larger orders which seem like sunbursts. . . . There was one man in sombre garb—a strange and sombre uniform of silver, black, and green."

"And who was that?"

"Walter Butler."

"And what might be that uniform? I know of no such corps."

"Doubtless he wore the uniform of that savage corps he has pledged his word to lead against the frontier."

"What manner of man is this Walter Butler?"

"Graceful, handsome, romantic, with melancholy eyes, and wearing his own black hair in a club.

"Gad, he cut a swathe among the ladies,—what with his skill on the guitar and his taste in singing a French love-song,—and his willingness to oblige. . . . One there was—a slim, red-lipped thing, with blue-bell eyes.

. . . In the dance, young Butler seems the very poetry of grace and motion. . . . But she matched him. . . . I could not learn her name, either, but her quality none might mistake; and I think she is the daughter of that Virginia magistrate who travels to advise Carleton how legally to commit such murders as he meditates. . . . She was the loveliest of all. . . . And very young. . . . It is said of Walter Butler that he is a sad rake and left a trail o' tears and broken hearts in Albany. . . . I know not. And, to see him, it is difficult to think ill of him,—hard to credit what is said of him. . . . Why, Nathan, as I gazed upon that young man in Province House I could scarce believe that he had come among us on so bloody and vile a mission. Truly he has not the mien of a man who promises to lead a body of savages against his own neighbours on the New York frontier."

He chewed his gum in silence for a while, ruminating; and I remained silent, digesting all he'd said. And I was certain that it was my Virginian maid he had seen.

He said, presently, as though communing with himself: "I think Walter Butler turned her head. . . . It was a most shameless wooing under the noses of them all. . . . He sang to her, danced every dance with her, wined her, supped with her. . . . And she scarce more than a child. . . .

"Well, then, nobody interfered. On the contrary, all beamed—Tommy, too—and her magistrate father. . . . Only one macaroni took no pains to be polite to Walter Butler; and a footman told me that this macaroni was the young girl's brother—" He shrugged: "Doubtless it is already arranged;—Virginia aristocracy and Tryon County quality. . . . Good royalists all; mated to breed a raft o' little royalists, all born singing lustily, 'God save the King!' in their own way of singing. . . . Yes, silks and jewels and wines and ices. . . . And a kennel bone for the starving poor in Boston town. . . . Damned rebels!"

I knew he spoke of Nancy Montague; and I suffered.

He got up; stood switching at his spurs with a hazel-stick:

"Well, Mr. Hancock says that you shall ride north as soon as may be, and do what you can to hold the Loup d'Orange against any wiles of Walter Butler."

"I?"

"Certainly."

"And how am I to conduct?"

"Offer them service and full pay as scouts when this coming war breaks on us here in Massachusetts."

"Am I authorized to do this?"

"You are. Your authority comes from the Continental Congress through our Provincial Congress. That is the reason why this Injun business has been so long delayed. Our Committee had no authority. But John Hancock got it yesterday, and invests you with it. . . . It is not to be committed to writing. You shall verify it at Fanueil Hall if you wish—or take my word for it."

"I take your word, Will."

We shook hands. He went out to the yard and climbed into his saddle. Then he gathered bridle, waved his hand, and set off at a canter along the road to Lexington.

And I sat down to think upon my Nancy, and realize the first and dreadful bitterness of love.

CHAPTER V

Witch-Eyes

WHEN obliged to be absent from home I was accustomed to make arrangements with my nearer neighbours to feed and milk for me during my sojourn abroad.

This precaution, now, I lost no time in accomplishing; and, by midday, was ready to set out on my horse, Trumpeter, for the country of the Loups d'Orange.

I wore a caped riding-coat and carried two blankets, one for Trumpeter and one for myself. Otherwise, I travelled light, taking only my rifle and ammunition; fodder and grain for my horse; and a sack of parched corn mixed with maple sugar, some pork, and a fry-pan.

These Loups—and, indeed, any of the Algonquian stock—resembled the Iroquois very little in civilization, ceremony, and political solidarity; and I knew not how to approach them.

And even had I any knowledge of such procedure or of their ceremonials, I had no credentials save by word o' mouth,—no attestants; and I carried no wampum belts to confirm my mission—not even a string. Nor, moreover, had I a penny's value in presents to offer these people.

How the devil I was to induce them to listen to me I did not know; and, as I travelled northward over the old coach road, the more I pondered it the more it seemed to me a sorry and a hopeless mission upon which Mr. Hancock had seen fit to despatch me.

Now, as I say, these people were Algonquins, conquered long since by the Iroquois and made a subject people.

Among these subject tribes the mere name, Iroquois, inspired terror. An entire people have been known to flee a hundred miles at the discovery of an Oneida moccasin imprint near their camp.

Once a year, to remind them of their vassalage, a single Mohawk warrior would stalk through their country, paying them little attention, permitting himself but a curt, contemptuous word or two of inquiry or decree. That was sufficient to terrify the Algonquian tribes from Rhode Island to Maine.

There were a few exceptions to this general fear and cowardice. One of the so-called Pequot clans—that of the Wild Turkey, I think—showed no terror of the Iroquois. Nor did the Siwanois, ghost-clan of the Mohicans—nor did the Turtle Clan of the Mohicans, nor any of the Loup d'Orange, as far as I was aware.

A sullen and dangerous silence reigned between these peoples and the Mohawks, whose wards they were supposed to be, and who were known as the Keepers of The Eastern Gate of the Long House, or Iroquois Confederacy.

But the trouble lay with the Algonquian race itself. As a race it never remotely approached the amazing civilization of the Iroquois. Its political structure was primitive and vague; its clan system was loose,—clans, tribes, and even nations being scarcely more than the memory of names, and easily to be confused even among themselves.

Only a common language held these Algonquian people together; and this bond was very loose because of the endless number of dialects spoken, and the use of Iroquois and Huron words in a language originally cloudy and, since their subjugation, debased.

Sachem, sagamore, chief, and shaman or wabeno—one scarcely knew which was which or where a clan began and a nation ended.

In our Province of Massachusetts Bay there still

dwelt nearly a dozen different tribes of these Algonquian people.

In spring, the hunting grounds of the Loups lay along our northern frontier and south of the boundaries of the New Hampshire grants. Here, I had understood from my little Loup comrades in school, the Loup d'Orange ranged; and thither I now was bound.

As I continued my progress north, I encountered fewer wayfarers, fewer houses; and, after a night in the woods by a campfire, I rode through a lonely land where no stage-coach jolted over the muddy, rutted road, nobody travelled a-horse or a-foot save, rarely, some shaggy backwoodsman jogging to some grist mill in the wilds, laden with a sack o'corn or rye.

Long ago my Uncle Absalom had died, and his school and barn had fallen into ruin, and a young forest sprouted where his fields had stretched to the river's edge.

I had heard of this, and so did not pass that way; nor by Stockbridge, either, nor through any of those neighbouring hamlets in the Housatonic, but turned my horse away from that valley and rode in the direction of the hills.

There is a long, low mountain wall which separates the Housatonic Valley from that of the Deerfield. An ancient Huron-Wyandotte war trail runs over it down along Cold River to the Deerfield, and across it near Rice's Fort to Charlemont, where it meets a road which runs through Deerfield village and all the way to Springfield.

Before I came to this mountain barrier I rode by a little lake where was a sugar bush and people boiling sap. They were worn and mournful looking men with silent faces, and those bright and restless eyes which ever are roving, and never seem tranquil nor at rest.

One of these came slowly to the road where I had drawn bridle, and he saluted me in silence and leaned upon his long rifle awaiting any word from me.

Then, at my brief inquiry:

"Red-skins?" says he;—"yes, they are fishing on the Deerfield with net and spear. I killed a doe yesterday with two Loup arrows in her. That's what they're about, too."

"Where is their camp, neighbour?"

"Between the mountains and Rice's Fort. You should follow the old war trail."

"Is it good for horses?"

"A party went over after sun-up this morning."

"A party of *horsemen?*" I asked uneasily.

"Aye; well horsed; red-coats, and red-men, too."

I was alarmed, but strove to conceal it, pretending merely curiosity and pleasure in the prospect of overtaking fellow travellers.

But, to my further inquiry, he answered with a question, demanding my political complexion. And when, at length, he became satisfied, he said with an oath, that the party of horsemen which had preceded me was composed of a British officer of the Indian Department, dressed in a green uniform, and with a Mohawk, a Sauk, and a Fox, in attendance,—all warriors, and all well mounted;—and, further, four troopers of the New York Border Horse riding in escort.

I thanked him, still pretending pleasure at the prospect, and so rode away toward the dark mountain wall ahead, a prey to every possible anxiety.

For here, very certainly, was an accredited mission hot from the Indian Department, and doubtless armed with all that I lacked of credentials and gifts.

The more I considered, the surer I was that this must be Guy Johnson's mission; that the Indian officer in green was none other than this Mr. Walter Butler, described to my by Will Dawes; and that he carried not only savages as interpreters with him, but chiefs of consequence who might exert weighty influence with the Loup d'Orange.

It was late in the afternoon when I finally began to

descend the dark mountain trail into that solitary and lovely valley of the Deerfield, which is a wilderness save only for those clearings and hamlets below Charlemont.

In earlier days there was more cleared land in this country, but the French and Indians destroyed its budding civilization, and, since those bloody days, new settlements were confined to those safer regions within support of Springfield.

Very soon I heard the rush and roar of Cold River tumbling down toward the Deerfield, where it curves out and sweeps that vast and rocky bastion towering below the mountain wall.

On cleared land to the right I saw the ruins of Rice's Fort, and the gravel rifts marking the ford across to Charlemont.

Crystal clear ran the Deerfield in the golden light of a westering sun, which already was setting behind another mountain wall across the river.

As I was descending toward the river willows, meaning to ride over the ford, I noticed smoke to the right of me, and saw some bark huts on the edge of the long meadow behind the ruins of Rice's Fort.

So I turned Trumpeter in that direction and rode into the belt of woods.

There is, inborn in me, a certain prudence which bids me sniff before I eat, and look before I step.

There was a Loup encampment among the trees along the edge of the meadow, and, already, a great fire burning there.

In the meadow were other fires and poles set up; but these were for drying fish; and I saw the Loup women and children still busy around these fires where nets were drying and fish were being smoked.

As for the Loup men, hunters and warriors, I saw nothing of them, nor any sign of Guy Johnson's mission.

Then, of a sudden, it came to me that maybe they had lost no time but had kindled a fire and already were in council.

So dismayed was I at the thought that I rode straight out across the meadow at a gallop, careless of who might notice me, and made directly for the bark huts and the smoke.

And now, as I rode up among the scattered trees, I saw instantly that my every fear had been confirmed. For yonder burned a council fire, and around it, in their blankets, were seated some three score Indians of the Loup d'Orange, listening to an officer in a green uniform who stood in the centre near the fire, haranguing them.

Near him stood his Mohawk interpreter, who had cast aside his blanket and appeared in his ceremonial paint and naked to the waist.

Now, no sooner did I appear riding up among the trees to the very edge of this council circle, than the officer in green ceased speaking, and he and half a hundred painted faces turned and stared at me in utter astonishment.

Amid a silence that rendered me uneasy, I got off my horse, laid my luggage on the ground, unsaddled and unbridled as though I belonged there, put on a halter, picketed Trumpeter, and shook out grain for him.

And all the time, in absolute silence, white man and savage stared at me without stirring, without a word.

But when I turned and advanced toward the fire circle, removing my riding-coat so I might sit upon it to listen, the officer in the green uniform strode toward me, and the circle parted to let him through.

I could not guess what he meant to say or do, but learned immediately; for he lifted his laced hat to me with every grace and ceremony, and I took off mine, and we bowed to each other, using every politeness and civility.

"Sir," said he, "it is my peculiar misfortune that I have not the honour of your acquaintance, and so anticipate that pleasure with every sentiment of agreeable consideration.

"My name is Walter Butler; my commission is that

of captain in the Indian Department; and I am here on a mission from Colonel Guy Johnson, his Majesty's Superintendent of Indian Affairs for North America."

We bowed again to each other, profoundly.

"Sir," said I, "I am a plain farmer who has come hither to pay a visit to some old school comrades among the Loup d'Orange."

He seemed surprised, but courteously awaited my name.

"I came here," said I in a loud and distinct voice, "to pay a visit to my former schoolmates, Ghost-snake, Gadfly, and their sister, Witch-Eyes. And my name is Nathan Holden—"

Before, even, I had ceased speaking, a young man in the circle cast aside his blue blanket, rose, and came swiftly toward me.

I stared at him, not recognizing him in his naked paint and feathers; then he grasped both my hands, laughing.

"Ghost-snake!" I exclaimed; and we embraced with all the impulsive ardour of school lads.

Already the Gadfly was at my elbow, striving to drag my hands from his brother's grasp to clasp them.

"Our guest! Our beloved comrade. Our honoured guest," repeated the Ghost-snake, his arm around my shoulder and patting it continuously.

I said to Captain Butler: "Sir, you were addressing remarks to my friends, the Loups d'Orange, and I ask pardon for interrupting you. Pray, Captain Butler, proceed and pay no heed to me, for I shall sit here with my old schoolmates and listen to your eloquence with every pleasure and curiosity."

At that he lost countenance a little, and seemed confused and irresolute. And, by Heaven, I had put him into a quandary, for, if I were not of his political colour, whether he continued or remained silent made no difference, now. Because here was another white man who had discovered him at a Loup council fire; and a word

of that from me would run over the Province like a silver-grass fire in October.

Walter Butler fixed his dark, golden, melancholy eyes on me:

"Mr. Holden," said he, "I doubt not that you are a friend to Government."

I laughed: "That is what I admire and desire, sir—a strong government and unafraid; and capable of enforcing respect for those it represents."

He had to take that for whatever it meant. And, however he interpreted it, he seemed satisfied, and bowed with much grace and good humour.

"Mr. Holden," said he, "I had all but finished what I came here to say to the Loups d'Orange. By your leave I will make an end of it in the usual manner, for I have a night journey before me and should return to Guy Park as soon as may be."

He bowed again to me, stepped into the circle where the fire burned redder now that the sun had slipped behind the mountains.

He drew himself gracefully erect; the painted interpreter joined him and handed him a wampum belt.

It was blood-red, and glistened as though it were afire.

"Brothers," he said in his clear, agreeable voice which now rang with a sort of sombre undertone, "I have said nearly all that I have to say to you concerning the matter that brought me here. You of the Loup d'Orange are our grandchildren. Our council-fire still burns at Onandaga. Your grandfathers, the Iroquois, have summoned you to attend. You shall not feel strange or lonely, for your elder brothers, the Delawares, will be there.

"Brothers, the King of England holds fast to the covenant chain which we Iroquois have brightened. We hold the other end of that chain and we invite you, also, to take hold.

"Brothers, you see, with me, a Canienga interpreter

who is also Roy-a-neh. You see, with me, a war-chief of the Sauk nation; and a war-chief of the Fox nation. At Guy Park, also, were envoys from the Ottawa, the Shawanese, the Wyandottes, and the Western Loups.

"*Brothers,* it is springtime, when birds fly north. Let no singing-bird deceive your Wise Men and Sagamores. Let no forked-tongue whisper lies after I depart.

"*Brothers,* what I have said to you I now confirm by this belt!"

He held out the red war belt with both hands. A Loup sachem already was casting aside his white and scarlet blanket to rise and receive it, when I whispered fiercely in the Ghost-snake's ear:

"If your Sagamore accepts that belt your people are ruined! Do you understand?"

"Yes," he said, "I knew you had come for that. Why don't you demand fire-right and speak?"

Even before I comprehended what he meant, I was on my feet. But I was too late. The red belt already had passed.

As Walter Butler left the fire, seeing me standing, he saluted me, and continued on, followed by the Mohawk, the Sauk, and the Fox, and by his four horsemen who went off after him, spurs and sabres jingling through the twilight.

And now I noticed their horses and saw them mounting; and presently perceived that they were riding toward the river at a smart canter. The ford lay that way, and a road through Woodstock to the Northland.

The painted Sagamore was still standing at the council-fire, motionless; and the scarlet war-belt lay across his palms like a shining snake.

"Speak before they cover the fire," came a voice in English from behind me.

I turned and saw an Indian girl—a slim thing in white fawnskin, leaning against a birch tree.

"Nathan!" she said.

"Witch-Eyes!"

"It is for me to cover that fire," she said, still speaking in English. "Our Sagamore is waiting. Ask them for fire-right. They can not deny you while the fire burns!"

At the same moment she came toward me through the circle, so close that her soft garments brushed me.

"Push me aside," she whispered, "or it will be too late!"

We both stepped into the circle at the same instant, and I pushed her aside, swept the circle of firelit figures at a glance:

"Loups d'Orange!" I cried sharply, "there is not one coal from Onondaga in your council-fire. Be careful what you are about!"

There was an astonished silence. Then Witch-Eyes, their fire-keeper, turned to me, came close to me, and, looking me in the eyes, laughed.

"Nathan," she said, "the fire still burns. If your tongue has forgotten mine, and stumbles, speak to my people in your own tongue and I shall interpret."

"Very well," I said, "but I don't know how, properly, to address a council—"

"Speak! I know how to make what you say acceptable."

Then, facing their Sagamore: "Sagamores and chiefs," I began, "and you, warriors and hunters of the Loup d'Orange, I have been sent here as envoy from the Continental Congress, which is composed of all the Wise Men and Sachems and the Sagamores of the white people of our thirteen colonies who are about to take up the hatchet against the King of England!"

And, to Witch-Eyes, I added: "Tell them that!"

When the girl had finished interpreting:

"Loups d'Orange!" I continued, "I come here with neither string nor belt nor present—without wampum, without attestant. I come as the envoy of very plain and sober people who work with their hands and who have had enough of kings.

"We mean to fight our King because he has taken

away our liberties and is attempting to make slaves of us.

"If England makes slaves of the white people of Massachusetts Bay, what do you suppose they will do to *you!*

"Loups d'Orange! If you prefer Iroquois wampum to the plain words of honest men, take it! *We* never made women of you! We do not threaten you, now. We ask you only to have a care what you are about.

"This war, which is coming on us, is truly none of your affair. It is a quarrel between white people and does not concern you. If you choose to remain neutral, we shall not complain. If you choose to enlist with us as scouts and runners for that great army which we shall raise, then I am bidden to say to you that your pay will be white man's pay, and you shall also have proper presents so that your families shall be provided for during your absence.

"Loups d'Orange! It were safer for your Sagamore to hold a rattlesnake across his palms than that war belt!

"And I ask you now, you Loups, are you *men,* or are you what the Iroquois pretend you are,—slaves, women, a conquered race who tremble at the very name of Iroquois?

"If you are slaves, we don't want you. If you fear the Long House, we don't want you. If you crawl like whipped dogs to an Onondaga fire, we have no need of you.

"Loups! The Iroquois tell us that every tribe and clan in the great Algonquian race are slaves and women. But we know different. Mohican, Siwanois, Pequot, Loup d'Orange have a history and a glory that the ages can not dim, that none can forget, and that the Iroquois can not take away from them.

"Loups! You struck the Iroquois in a hundred battles; and in a thousand years they could not mourn enough or raise up men enough to cover those graves! Nor are there, in all our forests, enough deer and enough

antlers to renew the ranks of those you slew. Your hatchets still stick in the snaky skull of their Atotahro; your war-arrows lie in their graves like quills around dead porcupines. Who says you are women? Ask these mountain peaks what you have done to the Mengwe in years gone by! *They* know. Ask those little stars that are beginning to come out under the feet of your Master of Heaven. *They* saw, and know!

"Ask your crystal clear river yonder if it remembers when it ran red with the blood of the Maqua! Aye, redder than the painted trout that swim there in their wedding paint!

"*Loups d'Orange!* A real man speaks to real men. Brother hails brother.

"Now, on this night of stars, and here in the ancient country of your honoured dead, if there be men among you such as lived when you faced the Maqua on the Mohawk, let them reply to a brother's words and not sit cringing before a scarlet belt! *Loups of the Panther Clan!* I have finished! Now, show me your minds!"

On the dying fire a green branch began to steam and hiss.

For a full minute a dead silence reigned.

Suddenly a horrid and catlike snarling filled the hissing silence. The painted Sagamore grasped the wampum belt in his hands, hurled it to the ground and spat upon it.

Instantly pandemonium broke loose; a score of young men scrambled to their feet; the Ghost-snake drew his hatchet and shouted for red paint; and Witch-Eyes snatched a lump of it from her beaded pouch and drew a crimson circle on the bark of a maple tree.

Then the Gadfly drove his hatchet into the red circle; the Ghost-snake struck it; one after another a score of excited young warriors struck at the symbol.

Already the fire was being replenished with great logs of dry wood; the painted Sagamore, stamping the ground, began to move his moccasined feet in rhythmic

tread around the fire, chanting the former glories of the Loup d'Orange.

Witch-Eyes took hold of my hand and drew me back through the excited young men who were beginning to join in the fierce chant, timing their steps to it, and we seated ourselves against an oak tree, our hands still clasped.

Her face burned with excitement; she sat breathless, lips parted, watching the dancing and listening to the chanting and to the drums which a Shaman and a young girl were now beating while their bodies rocked and swayed and bent and bowed.

"Witch-Eyes," I whispered, "I thank you."

"Ah," she breathed, "you were as wonderful as Uncas! You reminded us of what we had once been. We had forgotten our ancestors and our glory when we took that Iroquois belt. Now we remember! Now you have cleared our senses! The singing birds have flown; we know our minds!"

"It was you who did this thing, Witch-Eyes!" I insisted. But she only laughed in her excitement and clasped my hand the tighter.

The whirling clouds of sweet cherry and samphire smoke drugged me, strangled me.

I know not how it was, whether the feverish rhythm of the witch-drums or the fierce chanting or the windy roar of the flames flashing to the stars—or her arm around my neck!—I know not how or what it was that so violently stirred my mind, my senses, and my blood.

Their Shaman,—a mass of fluttering feathers like some great scarlet bird,—drummed and squalled and rattled the mass of panther claws in his sewan rattle.

The young men were tying long tails of club-moss to their girdles, and they danced like panthers on their hind legs, and trailed and switched their tails; and the woods rang with their terrific scalp cry.

Already every dancer was naked to the clout, shining with sweat and scarlet paint. They stripped from me

my shirt and marked my face and breast with their blood-red clan-sign and thrust a scarlet-feathered arrow into my left hand. They were singing:

"Fire is a red flower;
War is redder.
Maquas are moles
Hiding in holes.
What is that sound
Under the ground?

"It is the death cry that the Maquas raise
Where the Wabeno slays!"

Two youths, dripping with sweaty oil and running scarlet, whirled 'round and 'round the fire screaming and growling like panther kittens at play.

Witch-Eyes put one arm around my waist and I encircled hers, and her fawn-skin shirt was warm and wet with sweat.

She began to sing, her clear young voice trembling with excitement:

"I had a brother
And his neck was white;
He, and no other,
Came in the night.
Ihó! Ihó!
Bend the red bow!
Ehó! Ehó!
Show us our foe!
E—Kò!"

She was trying to rise, now, pulling me also to my feet. A blast of hot birch smoke choked us; she laughed and swayed in it like a drunken thing, and her voice came like a ghost's cry through the smoke:

"We have a brother
Who shows us the Past;
He and no other,
The earth alone lasts!

All has an ending,
Future and Past!
Scarlet bow, bending—
The Earth alone lasts!
Ma cânté maséca!
The Earth alone lasts!"

And: "Aké-u! Aké-u!" shouted the dancers; "Their glory never dies!"

But the girl cried: "No! Neither the years nor the dead ever return. Glory dies, love dies; the earth alone lasts!"—she lifted her arms to the spangled sky:

"Master of Life," she cried passionately, "give back our ancient glory in this hour! Fling thy white belt among the stars to teach Eternity that we Loups once lived!"

At that same instant, as though in answer, a star fell through space showering the firmament with incandescence.

"Wabeno!" screamed the Loups. "She is a witch!"

I thought she had fainted, and caught her and held her upright. Her eyes were brilliant and wide; a slight foam glimmered on her lips.

"Wabeno!" they shouted, "Wabeno! Our little sister is a witch! She has shown us our belt among the stars. Our ancient glory shall return to us! Iná h! Iná h! Our glory shall return!"

Then the Sagamore came and took her by the wrists and stared and stared into her swooning eyes.

"She is a witch," he said.

"Wabena! Wabena!" they shouted in their frenzy; "she shall be clothed in ermine and scarlet feathers! She shall prophesy for us with a painted drum! God has given a real witch to the Loups d'Orange! Is it for nothing that she bears her name?"

The Sagamore lifted Witch-Eyes in his arms, and carried the half-conscious girl to a blanket under an oak, where he laid her and propped her up. Then, stepping back a pace, he cried out to her in a loud voice:

"Witch of the Loups, is it peace or war?"

In the dead silence every eye was on her, and saw her scarlet lips, still voiceless, form the word, "War."

Then the dreadful battle-yell of the Loup d'Orange split the flame-shot darkness. Through the wild tumult of the dancing a war-chief shouldered his way toward me, scarcely escaping the upflung knives and hatchets: and he thrust at me a bundle of little sticks painted red, and tied with the sinews of a panther.

I put them into my pocket. I felt blinded and deafened like a drunken man, and knew not what I was about, yet seemed aware that I was shouting, and shaking my naked knife above my head.

How I got saddle onto my horse I know not; nor how I contrived to bridle him, or get me to my stirrups.

I seem to recollect that all the way across the mountain wall, torches brandished by naked, painted men lighted the rocky trail. And after that I must have slept in my saddle; for I opened my eyes in brightest sunshine, and discovered I was lying on my back in a wild meadow where my horse, near by, fed on little patches of short new grass.

When I got me to my feet I saw a river, and knew it for the Housatonic.

And this is the true story of how I journeyed to and returned from the country of the Loup d'Orange and how I, counselled by Witch-Eyes, did prevail over the secret and subtle plan of Walter Butler, and how it came about that we gained these people for our cause.

And all the long way on my journey home I pondered the ways of chance and fate and destiny, and knew that these ways were never really what they seemed, nor blind and senseless, but were ever the planned and ordered ways of Almighty God.

CHAPTER VI

First Love

ON that morning, before sun-up, robins were noisy everywhere, and their lusty music awoke me in my bed. A fine-spun mist possessed the world.

Lying there in the lemon-tinted light o' dawn, I heard our lark of the meadows singing clear and joyous in the brief intervals of the cock's crowing and loud chirruping of the robins. Far and piercingly sweet it came over leagues of dewy pastures where spring vapours already were afloat—slim, tall shapes that swayed and moved like fine ladies in their lace levetes.

In my cap and night-rail I went yawning to the open window and looked out; and saw the sly and glittering sun peering at me over our hill. All the chaste and silvery-naked world blushed rosy under old Sol's hardy gaze, and the little ladies of the mist were rising everywhere to scatter into flight before him.

In that sad year of '75 spring came mercifully early to us in Massachusetts Bay. April already was like May—as though Nature, more pitiful than man, sought to comfort us in our most unhappy situation.

Now in my sleepy ears the singing of the birds seemed to grow duller; the sunlight became tarnished; I turned my head, sobered, sombred by my thoughts, and gazed in the direction of the unseen and beleaguered city where the enemy of all manhood lay entrenched. Boston was starving on this fair April morning. Yonder she lay like that wretched creature in the myths of the Greeks, upon whose immortal vitals a vulture fed—disembowelled, yet living on.

For, although in Boston all commerce by water was

dead, and wharves rotting, and hull and cable had grown foul with weed, their tall transports and their warships continued to arrive crammed to the very scuppers with red-coats and cannon. And these increasing swarms settled in the starving city, eating out its very heart, resolved upon its slavery or destruction.

Well, God only knew the end. Meanwhile, He had sent us April most artfully disguised as May; and there was spring plowing to be done and crops to be raised and carried to the famine stricken city now cut off entirely from the harvests of the sea—the harvests to which this sea-city had been born, and upon which depended her very life.

Thinking of these things I went presently about my business. And first I washed me, combed out my hair and tied it in a neat queue with an end of sober ribbon—but wore neither powder nor bag; and it vexed me that the ends of my hair should curl like a girl's and lie not smoothly at the temples.

Then I dressed me in my common and unbleached shirt which had no ruffles; drew on leather breeches, stout shoon, and my woodsman's leggins of deer leather.

My hat was faded and stained and somewhat ragged, but I had sewed up the brim with pack thread and cocked it gaily with a bunch o' bayberry.

Now I went out of my chamber into the kitchen and here I made a little fire and set me a pot o' porridge to cook, and drew water, and cut me a rasher too.

My two cows, Blythe and Janie, heard me and lowed from the barn; and my gray horse, Trumpeter, whinnied and stamped and snorted to tell me he was hungry.

I took my milk pails and went to the barn. And first I watered and fed Trumpeter, and then shook out feed for the cows, and milked whilst they munched.

After that I split wood, fed the hens, took what eggs I could discover, turned out the cows, then came indoors and sat me down to a dish of new milk and porridge in

the kitchen; and, being young and hungry, did cook me a strip of bacon, too, and, with it, a new laid egg.

And whilst I ate I was sensible of the fragrant breeze blowing through doors and windows, and how all the world, lately so still through the stark, black winter, was now so happily awake—and how the blue air seemed full of cheery noises—the cock's lusty clarion, the coo-coo of doves, even the hum of some early, burly bee seeking those first shy blossoms that open in April woodlands, to rifle them.

Eating my porridge I thought about our city of Boston, and about my country which, of late, seemed to me far broader than merely my own province of Massachusetts Bay—far vaster; and, God help me, more vital than any separate and single province.

In Connecticut I saw no longer neighbours; in New York, in Rhode Island I no longer saw strangers; I saw *brothers* everywhere, in these colonies and dominions and proprietaries, and commonwealths.

And it was thus I had written in the tract which I had made and which I had copied three times and sent a copy each to Mr. Hancock, to Dr. Warren, and to Mr. John Adams.

It was thus that I now saw and understood our people —not selfishly separated, each busy with his petty business—not as inhabitants of separate colonies, jealous, distrustful of one another, bigoted, slaves to their several and local charters—but as *Americans first of all!* And, as such, standing dauntlessly and *united* for those ancient and English liberties which we, as Englishmen, had inherited with our mother's milk, and which, to-day, a German King of England would take away from us with bayonets.

Slowly eating my porridge and bacon there in the sunny kitchen, I was content that I, Nathan Holden, yeoman, of Lexington, should have writ my tract—which I called *An Appeal to Manhood*—to such good purpose that Mr. Hancock did order two thousand to be printed

secretly, and Dr. Warren was pleased to read my tract at a meeting of the Mechanics' Club.

While I scraped my wooden bowl clean and drained my cup of fresh milk, my thoughts were very intent upon what next I should compose and write—not, God is my witness, to heedlessly inflame our folk of Massachusetts Bay, but to show them temperately and in reason how best we might stiffen our resistance to British tyranny and how we Americans of all colonies ought to become as one people in our proud and unwavering determination to live as free as any Englishman on earth, or to perish defending those immortal liberties to which our English blood entitles us.

I went out to the shed, dragged the plow to the yard, harnessed Trumpeter, and drove him out through the bars to the roadside five-acre strip—two years, now, fallow pasture—and which this spring I was determined to break up for corn, beans, squash, and potatoes.

It was a young, pale world of early spring that I gazed upon as I set my ploughshare's burnished nose to the fallow and started my horse.

The worn leather reins lay loosely looped around my shoulders; my hands grasped the worn handles of my plough; I spoke low to Trumpeter, who was a wise old horse and could plough a straighter furrow all alone than could I by guiding him.

Mine is a lightish soil but good—a not too sandy loam, but still not fashioned for deeper ploughing than is measured by half the share.

Each time I came to my house and turned again I knew more surely, more passionately than ever that any who dared menace that humble home of mine were true enemies to mankind; and that I should so treat them, whether they came in feathers and paint or in the scarlet livery of my King and sovereign.

Once, when my field was half ploughed, I stopped at the turn to look soberly at my little house.

My father and my mother had lived and died there.

It was but a humble house, there behind the stone wall where a few phlox and hollyhocks grew in summer—a modest house of but one story with an attic under its high-pitched roof. House, barn, the well by the road-side gate, the great maples in front of it—the thirty acres, partly cleared, around it—here was my all on earth. . . . And there were thousands and thousands of little homes like mine in Massachusetts Bay. What did King George the Third want of them? By what right did he disturb them with his red-coats and his brazen drums?

I had a copy-book in my pocket and a stub of a Faber pencil. With the horse standing in the furrow and the reins loose around my shoulders, I set pencil to paper as though awaiting further inspiration toward stirring my people to defiance.

Yet, somehow, the golden air around me was so soft, the sky so blue, the sun so kindly warm on the crisping loam—and I saw little birds already courting, and, on the barn roof, doves in amorous dalliance.

The gentle winds smelled of waking woods and new grass and budding twigs. There was tenderness in it, and wistfulness, and it touched my cheek like a caress from a maid's shy finger-tips—

I was twenty-one.

Now there came a butterfly, and the very first I had seen—a-flitting over the ground, and settled on the crumbling furrow's edge to sun his wings which were rich as an autumn maple-leaf though faded some and ragged as my hat.

I was twenty-one; and had loved. And was still in hopeless love, alas! And had beheld only one woman who could stir within me any warmth or quicken my pulses by a beat. . . . And I dreamed of her. . . . Very often; in this new springtime. Often, too, when alone with a book beside the dying fire, and the gray cat asleep at my feet, dreaming of mice.

The point of my pencil, being close to the paper of

my copy-book, began to write all of itself, and by no impulse of my own, I swear.

And this is what I wrote:

Sing, little bird, in yonder tree,
And tell me who that maid shall be,
Or fair or brown or tall or small,
Who one day shall appear to me
And at whose pretty feet I'll fall.
Sing, little bird, divinely sing,
And bid me buy my wedding ring!
Alas! I never now shall wed
I'll die, a single man, instead,
For one alone my heart is fain
And her I love and love in vain!

Now when I had writ this silly song, not of my proper will but as though my pencil had guided every word of itself, I gazed at it in astonishment because never before in my life had I wrote a verse or ever nourished desire to do so. A lively wind fluttered the paper and loosened it from the book. I laid it back again and studied it in amaze.

And I think I must have been standing there in a sort of dumb and silly booby-dream, for I plainly heard the noise of horses and of wheels on the high road by the wall, but neither noticed nor looked up. Only when the rusty creak of my well-sweep made a scraping sound in the stillness did I raise my enraptured head.

And there I discovered a very young girl wearing a travelling mask, standing by the well, with both little gloved hands letting down the bucket by its rod. And beyond, on the highroad, was a great travelling coach halted, with six horses, and postillions and outriders, and some men examining one of the horses.

As I stood there at gaze, a brisker breeze fluttered the sheet of paper loose from my copy-book and blew it out across the furrows to the well, where it lodged

against the skirt of her travelling mantel at her very feet.

I saw her pick it up, one hand still grasping the well-sweep; and I became confused to see her calmly pause to read what I had writ there.

I knew not what countenance to make her when she turned her head and gazed at me across the fallow, for never before had I looked on such beauty as was hers.

"Sir," said she—and her young voice came sweetly fresh across the little distance—"if this verse be of your own devising, I think you will have more occasion for it than I." And she removed her mask and extended her hand with the paper held toward me. And then I saw she was the Virginian girl, Nancy Montague!

I freed my shoulders of the reins and went to her across the crumbling loam as though I walked in dreams.

"It is a very pretty verse, but I should not have read it," said she, "and ask pardon for impertinence. Yet, having a little known you—in bygone days—ventured the indiscretion—counting on your indulgence."

Her bearing seemed discreet, yet in her eyes I saw a glimmer dancing like starlight on blue water. The situation was exciting us both.

I said in a voice scarce like my own: " 'Tis but a stray thought rhymed indifferently to pass the time. . . . I thank you, and am sorry for your trouble. . ."

"Are you a poet, sir, like Piers ploughman?"

"You know already I am no poet," said I, bitterly, "—but only an Express Rider."

"Oh. Yet it is most rarely conceived, your verse. I think you are also a poet, sir."

"You are too kind, madame."

"Well, no, sir; I am not kind at all to Express Riders. And not often to their verses. Yet I maintain your verse is both skilfully and agreeably contrived,—your verse which you have writ to your unknown lady, who shall one day appear to you. . . ." The glimmer in

her eyes was becoming a voiceless laughter. "I assume," says she, "that your lady is as yet unknown to you?"

Said I: "Alas, she is not unknown to me. She first revealed herself in Virginia." And I looked very straight into eyes of a melting hue like dewy blue-bells at dusk.

"Sir," said she, with rosy deliberation, "if the lady of your verse be not unknown to you, you should go to Virginia and woo her. Do you expect to discover her in the April solitude of these fields?"

She was so lovely a thing to look upon that between my mind and my eyes my tongue wandered without shame or discretion.

I said: "There is another verse to be contrived for this same lady and this same song; and it shall answer your question if it please you to be so answered."

"Sir, do you mean to compose it now?"

"If you have the leisure and complaisance to await the event, madame."

"I pray you draw me first a cup of water from your well."

I took the handle of the well-sweep from her hand —a slim hand fragrantly gloved—and drew water, and offered it in the dipper. And, at that moment, whilst she set her lips to the dipper's edge, I fell in love. And for the first time ever in my life was deep in love, there in the April sunshine by our well.

"Sir," said she, "this water is as sweet as your verse —but somewhat colder—"

She blushed a trifle at her own jest, then looked at me, dewy-eyed, and laughed. I think young princesses must laugh as she did.

"Tell me, sir," said she, still smiling; "what do you here a-ploughing when you should be making verses for your lady-love? Have you no slaves to till your fields?"

"No," said I, "nor any man at hire."

"Is it so?" she said compassionately. "Yet you must be gently bred to be so lettered and to write such verse. Alas, sir, it seems sad that in this New England, full of

shop-keepers and tin-peddlers and makers of shoe-peg oats and wooden nutmegs, a gentleman should lack that worldly competence that might free him of care and toil and permit him to devote to the Muses the sacred gift of heaven."

"Well," said I, "you are more than kind to my verses, and less than just to my countrymen, madame. I am but a farmer, though educated at our Harvard College in Cambridge yonder. My father before me was a farmer; and my mother spun at her wheel. I am of the soil and none other."

"No need to tell me you are stressed gentle-folk," said she with serious compassion.

At that I laughed: "What I *do* counts only, and makes me what I *am;* and nothing else can make or unmake a man in my opinion."

"We, in Virginia," she said curiously, "have heard that New England makes little of the nobility and landed-gentry of these provinces. And are you, too, of such ungentle opinions?"

"I count it not against a man that he wear a gilt edge to his hat."

"You would not wear one if you had the right?"

"Madame, I—do not know."

"*Have* you the right?"

"I do not know of what quality were my forebears. Some iron-faced, iron-helmed rider of Oliver's, I think."

"That seems strange. . . . And you so lettered, and a poet."

"Why," said I, "do you desire to know whether by right I might wear a gilt border to my hat? . . . As did your forebears in their plumes, riding to battle and singing of King Charles?"

She stood, still holding the brimming dipper and looking at me across it. After a while she drank from it a little more, then lowered it and looked at me.

"Because," she said, "I find you amiable and gentle, and your talent pleases me. . . . And I desire to

read that other verse which you shall compose and which shall answer me my question concerning where in Virginia, and *when* you discovered the mistress of your heart and mind." She laughed.

"Lacking a gilt band to my hat," said I, "you would not care to read my verses? Would you, madame?"

"Oh, hang all bands," quoth she, "if but the race be gentle. Come, sir, our former acquaintance, and your bearing and your verse have answered me already. And I am seriously inclined to listen to your unborn verse—if you would honour me so far—"

"It is in your honour that I shall instantly compose it!" said I impulsively.

"In *mine,* sir! La, no! But in honour of your unknown lady—"

"I said that she is *not* unknown to me, but hath appeared."

"And I ask you, sir, where in God's name you discovered her to whom you write verses which a shameless breeze seized and lodged against *my* knee?"

"Madame, the verses of themselves sought her for whom they were written—"

"Sir! I do not understand—"

"—Found her, and fell at her young feet—at her feet!—whither my knees incline me—urge me—drag me—"

"What rashness is it that possesses you—impels you—to so strange a speech?" she said in a low, breathless voice, yet meeting smilingly my enchanted eyes with hers.

We both were flushed and seemed oddly laboured in our breathing, yet looked full into each other's eyes as though some strange spell held us.

"Scarcely my name and quality do you know," said she, "yet desire to write me verses and cast you at my feet. . . And we have but three times ever clapped eyes upon one another!" . . . And, "Heaven help us!" cries she, "have I journeyed by water and land for

near half a thousand miles to see a poet leave his plough to fall upon his knees before my feet?"

"I shall write you such a verse," said I hotly, "that never any lover ever before has written to any mistress of his heart and soul!

"I shall write for you such a song of April passion that the music of the wild birds shall fit it to be sung!—that it shall be a perfect harmony of April winds and April waters, and shall mirror in the singer's eyes blue skies and budding leaves!

"You say I am a poet! Hear me, then, if indeed I truly be one! Our destiny loosed a breeze which laid my blind verses at your feet. I looked and saw the loveliest thing God ever fashioned standing where you stand!"

And, "Heaven," quoth she faintly, "this young man's native prose is purest poetry; and every word he utters is a verse enchanting all that listen. . . . Sir, I would have you know that I am but sixteen until last March. And feel strangely to be courted. . . . But do not deny I may become accustomed to the pleasure. . . . And my mother was wedded at sixteen. . . . And her mother at fifteen. . . . Sir; I pray you write me instantly that other verse—"

"I cannot take my gaze from you to write."

"Sir; the time is brief—" She glanced over her shoulder toward the coach standing under the maples. Then, hurriedly to me: "You already know that I am Nancy Montague, of Virginia. Yonder comes Judge Montague, my honoured father. That young man is my brother—seated in the coach a-dusting of his nose with a macaroni's laced hanker. We shall bate at Buckman's Tavern in Lexington. Dare you follow me?"

"To the world's end!" said I. "And all my life shall strive to win you!"

"A pretty speech, sir," says she, with a lively blush. "Who sees believes. Who loves, follows. Who wins must dare. . . . I think my father would have it in

his mind to kill us both if he but heard us here. That's to comfort you. So, for God's gentle sake, have a care, sir, for I see him coming this way. And you shall contrive,—for my sake,—to control your tongue and temper, because my father does not believe there exists a gentleman in all *New* England save only such as *Old* England sends in arms. Sir, will you endure for sake of me if he affronts you?"

"I will," said I, reddening.

"And will you come under my window to-night at Buckman's Tavern?"

"I will."

"And give to me my verse?"

"I will—"

We both fell silent as a slender, handsome, grey, and ruddy man in a caped travelling coat of claret and gold lace came to the gate and entered, and approached the well where we were standing.

"Come, child," said he, "you need loiter here no longer, for Jock Supple hath cut the nigh trail-nag for the staggers and the sorry beast is fit to travel."

And, to me: "We are beholden to your hospitality for a cup of water and the shelter of your roadside trees, young man. Here's for you to drink the King's health—"

He pulled his purse and drew from it a newly minted piece of silver, upon which glittered his Majesty's august head.

At that I made him a very low bow with a sweep of my ragged hat, till it brushed the dandelions on the new grass.

"Sir," said I, forgetting all my promise, "if the King's proper head were as bright as this one, I would accept it as a true and precious portrait of his Majesty. But, sir, the one is so dull, and this other so brilliant, that I fear forgery and dare not accept."

Mr. Justice Montague gazed upon me with a most

majestic glare which, as he detected the mockery, became a reddened stare of anger.

"Never," said he in a sort of hollow roar, "have I listened to such outrageous disloyalty in all my life!"

"Sir," said I, "you should have conducted more wisely than to offer payment for a cup of New England water. Our water is free, sir, even to the King of England's magistrates. But you may say to his Majesty that all his soldiers could not force us to brew a cup of Boston tea, nor all his treasure bribe us to set a single kettle boiling in New England."

"Nan," he said hoarsely, "the coach is waiting." He glanced contemptuously at me,—"and the gallows too, sir, for your proper information and advertisement!"

I saluted him with every ceremony and opened the gate for him.

He passed out, very hot and red, not even noticing me. I looked at Nancy. She shot at me a strange look, half angry, half frightened; and I swept her my very best and lowest bow. But the heart in me was deathly afraid; and I think the fear of what she now must think of me showed white in misery on my features; for, of a sudden, she dropped her father's arm and ran back to the gate and gave me her gloved hand to kiss. But said nothing, though her father bellowed at her.

And so I saw them mount into their gilded coach and drive away toward Lexington.

CHAPTER VII

Youth

AS in a dream I went back to my plough; and all that April morning I ploughed my roadside acres scarce conscious of what I was about, seeming aware only that all the world was but a vast and sunlit bower full o' birds and buds.

Came slowly driving his cart toward Concord one Ebenezer Warne, a shipwright of Boston, but now idle like others, who went about the country to purchase what provisions might be had, there being scarce any left in Boston town. Also he had been captain in our company of Royal Light Horse in Boston, in which I was cornet, and we had trained every month until the British closed the Neck.

Like all the city companies of militia and trained bands, there were as many King's people in our ranks as those otherwise minded. And so in grenadiers, artillery, horse, and foot, there was disruption if not actual disbandment. Mr. Gage required of all companies their colours; and I, together with several ensigns and cornets, did furl and carry our colours to Province House, and there deposited them, the Adjutant insolently refusing us any receipt.

Of these matters I thought when, ploughing near the stone wall, I saw Ebenezer Warne in his cart.

He pulled up by the way and sat there looking down at me as I left my plough and came to the stone wall.

"Well, Nathan," says he, "they are dressing British officers in smocks and gaiters, like any yokel, and sending them riding out through the country to spy what we are about."

"Have you seen any?" I demanded.

"I have passed two separate parties since leaving Boston. I knew them, spite o' their smocks and sorry nags.

"I talked to Paul Revere at sun-up this morning. He doubts not there is mischief afoot and that we had best look to lock and flint against our needs."

"Is it thought that they might march out?" I asked.

"It is whispered in the clubs that there is trouble a-stewing, and some say they sniff it. . . . Half the Boston militia are rotten; the city is a prison for all of our complexion. . . . If the British march out, only the village companies are free to act. . . . The brunt must fall upon the alarm companies. . . . Well, God knows what is hatching out o' Province House. . . . Paul says that you should have a care for your powder and be ready to bury what stores you possess. . . . Are you a minute-man, Nathan?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well, then, have a care how you talk to any yokel on a nag who sits too stiff in the saddle and whose hands are too white and fine."

In the silence that fell between us, very far away some farm bell sounded the midday hour. I asked him to stay and eat, but:

"Get you a piece," said he, "if you are hungry. As for me, my stomach is sour with apprehension and I shall get me along toward Concord."

So he drove away; and a little while I thought of what he had said; then, God forgive me, the graver need of things passed from my mind, and it was instantly full again of sunshine and soft winds—and love. . . . And love!—so instantly born out of a voice and a smile, here under April skies by my roadside well.

What I cooked and ate, or, indeed, if I ate at all, I do not remember.

All that sunny afternoon I ploughed and paused to dream; and harrowed, and dreamed again; and in the

barn I sat me down, idly to winnow what seed I had and let it run through my fingers, a-thinking, always a-thinking of this magic that had been wrought; and my heart, now loud and beating an unknown rhythm, now so strangely stilled that breath, too, seemed to fail till a swift sigh thrilled lungs and heart to life.

I did what was to be done about the house and barn; milked, fed, watered. If I ate supper I do not know. When the primrose light of sunset dulled to a violet and sweet-scented dusk; and when the first night-star glimmered palely overhead; I dressed me in my other suit and in my frilled shirt.

Then, by a tallow dip, seated in my chamber, I took pencil and strove to compose that other verse wherein I was to tell my dear mistress that I loved her and was monstrous deep in love, and so to plead my burning yet respectful passion—though God knew whither it led me.

But I could not find in my humming head a line to write, nor contrive a single rhyme, either—so vast a subject seemed my new-born passion, so pitiful the limit of rhymed words in a little limping verse.

And the hour waxed late, and later as I bit my pencil in an agony of haste and impatient love, till, despairing, I did write upon my paper but the single line: "I love you, and ever shall until I die!" and stuffed it into my pocket.

Then to saddle Trumpeter and mount, and in the dark to set out for Buckman's Tavern—and I scarce aware of what I was about until, in the starlight, I rode into the green, and saw in the housen round about no candle light save only in one window of the tavern;—all else still and dark around.

Under this lighted and open window I rode, and, from my saddle, looked up; and presently, in a low voice, I called her name.

Now the beating heart in me nigh stopped, then ran riot, as I saw her come to the window above me and lean there on folded arms, looking down—so white and

soft and childlike in her snowy night-rail, and her hair all loosened about her flower-like face.

"Is it you again?" quoth she with a little sound of hushed laughter in her voice. "And my verses," says she, "—have you made them, sir?"

"Forgive me," said I, "for I could find no rhyme in a mind distracted with a so sudden passion as now assails mine, and which so sweetly hath undone me."

"Fie, sir! You promised me a verse!"

"I have made all I know," said I. "Here it is, writ upon this paper—"

"My verse?"

"Alas, it is done in prose—"

"Sir, is your mind then so distracted with this sudden passion that you can find no wit to contrive a pretty verse to tell it?"

"Madame, I do love the very earth you walk upon, but so confused am I that I lack wit to make a rhyme of a so sacred passion—"

"Is it so solemnly, then, that you have conceived this —regard for me—which you so warmly protest?"

"Oh, Nancy," I pleaded, "it is so holy a sentiment that I be awed and dumb when I strive to think on it."

She leaned a little lower. I thought she smiled but her voice was serious and very low:

"Dear lad," she said, "I am not untouched by all you tell me. . . . And it is quite plain to me that you and I are unaccustomed to the proper expression of those tender sentiments which—I do not deny—we seem to entertain, one for the other. . . ."

"Oh, Nancy! Nancy! I do very truly love you, and would follow you to the world's ends!"

"I am not insensible to your pretty courting, sir. . . . What is it you have writ upon the paper—"

Even as she spoke I heard a door open in her room and her father's voice: "Nancy! Why are you not abed?"

"I was but star-gazing, sir," she faltered, withdraw-

ing swiftly from the window as her father entered the room.

"I thought I heard your voice," said he.

"At prayer, perhaps, sir."

"Well, then, get you to bed, child, and good night to you."

Her light went out. He went away; I heard the door close behind him. Then, to the darkened window above me she came again and leaned far over as though striving to perceive my features.

"Friend Nathan," says she, scarce above a whisper, "the road to love is ever a rough one, or so it is said. Did you hear my honoured father bid me to get me to bed? And if I do, why, that's the last ever you shall see of me, and so our pretty play must end. . . . Sir, of what are you thinking that you gaze up so earnestly at me?"

"That I most dearly love you."

"La! So swiftly hath love seized upon you, sir?"

"Must I despair?"

"But my father will have it that no gentleman ever yet was come out of New England, save only those who entered it from Old England. . . . Sir, he would not brook your politics or you,—though *I* know you to be a poet and no yokel, but a gentleman of sentiment and delicacy and a most profound scholar at that, and out o' Harvard College, too!"

She reached down with one hand: "Nathan, give me what you have writ—if you can reach my hand."

In a low, tremulous voice I bade Trumpeter stand, then climbed up onto the saddle and, so standing, could reach her hand to touch it with my lips.

"Oh, Nathan," says she in a sweetly breathless voice, yet left her hand to me, hanging out low from her window sill in the starlight.

"Bid me hope, my sweet!"—I scarce found voice for the pleading; yet she heard.

"Yes," she said, "you shall hope; for never yet it

has happened that any man before you hath had this much of me. . . . I wish to listen to you. I do seriously desire to hear you court me. . . . I know not if it be something in these stars that so stirs me, Nathan. . . . You swear you love me?"

"I swear I do! All earth and heaven are merged in you. I will follow you; brave all things; suffer all things for sake of you! And if you bid me win you, that I shall do, for I shall know it is God's purpose. Nancy! Nancy! Bid me strive for you!"

"I—bid you—win me, Nathan."

"I shall lie here under these stars below your window this night; and if you depart on the morrow I shall follow you, and so continue while life endures," I cried in a kind of fever, and my head as light and glorious as my heart.

But, "Oh, God," says she, "my father will have none of you, or of any rebel or New England man! Poor lad! I think my brother would spit you on his court-sword if you but looked sideways upon his sister. . . . Oh, deary me! oh, sack o' zounds! Am I to discover so true an affection in a young man and requite it with a dismal dish o' grief? O'h Nathan, I have no mind any longer what we are to do!"

"I could mask and stop your coach!" I said, all afire for her.

"We carry blunderbusses, dear lad, and pistols too a-plenty. . . . I am minded to climb down to you, now!"

"Nancy! Have you the courage?"

"Oh, of that a-plenty, sir. Only—in my night rail—"

"You shall dress quickly and drop into my arms—"

"Give me first what you have writ on your paper saying that you truly entertain for me an honest senti ment. Did you so write it, Nathan?"

"No; I say it now then."

"What did you write? Give it me for a pledge, and I will dress me!"

I fumbled in my pocket, keeping my balance with difficulty where I stood upright upon my saddle, Trumpeter ever shifting to browse the new grass and reach for distant tufts.

"Be still, you!" I muttered, fishing in my pocket for my brief love-letter; and, discovering it, reached upward.

When instantly, to my horror, a large hand did snatch it from me, and I beheld a red and angry countenance under a nightcap, which did bellow at me: "Begone!" and "Vagabond!" And I heard Nancy's voice cry out, "Oh, father, we are innocent, and I beg your countenance in behalf of this young gentleman—"

"Are you mad!" cried her father with a pretty oath or so; "and who the devil is yonder fellow under your window upon a horse?"

"Nathan," says she in a small, meek voice; and:

"Nathan? Nathan what?"

"Oh, father, if he told me I do not recollect—"

"Damnation!" he shouts, "is the world turned upside down? Get you to bed, you baggage!—"

And, suddenly again at the window above me, candle alight, and reading of my love-letter to his daughter:

"—Hey! What's this! Damme—d—damme, sir! Has ever anybody heard the like of this most insolent and damnable—"

"Oh, Nathan! Fly! Fly!" wailed Nancy from the depths of her bed, "—and forget not your most holy promise to be true to me—"

Slam went the window; and Trumpeter jumped. Through the panes I saw her father shake his fist at me as I was falling. And I did fall upon my noddle in a large syringa bush which scraped me but saved my crack-brain from a worse crack.

I got me to my feet and went and took hold of Trumpeter; and what between a head full o' love, and

a partly-stunned brain, I stared up at the darkened window, gaping like a fool bereft.

And if that was the end of it all I had no mind or wit left to compass the disaster; only I knew I meant to keep my word and follow her with whom I was now utterly possessed—follow her to ends of the world, whatever awaited there.

Presently, leading my horse, I went slowly toward the barn where I meant to lie with my horse that night and watch the sun rise from my saddle, lest she escape me forever more.

And never, never did I dream that God Almighty Himself was to take a hand this very night in the fate of this young girl, and in my own fate, too. And in the fate of millions who now slept; and in a million million yet unborn.

Yet, thus it came to pass upon this April night.

CHAPTER VIII

Macaroni

NOW as I took Trumpeter by the bridle and led him slowly toward the barn, out o' the tail of my eye I saw the tavern door opening in the bright moonlight, and knew instantly who was to come forth and upon what alarming business.

I made no error in my guess; there stood Mr. Justice Montague in his flowered banyan and his turban, and his bare feet thrust into bed-shoon; and grasped his lifted walking stick in one hand as though at parry.

When he perceived me he came to the porch and called out to me:

"Are you he who stood but now upon a saddled horse under my daughter's window?"

"Sir," said I very humbly, "I am deeply sensible of my indiscretion, which was my own fault and none of Nancy's. Sir; let the honourable sentiments which animate my heart and mind plead an inexperience in which, however, no proper respect is lacking—"

"What the devil have I to do with your inexperience and your heart and what you call your mind!" roars he. "Who are you and where the devil do you come from? You shall answer, do you hear? You shall give an accounting for this hardy impudence!"

His rudeness vexed me and I liked not the play of his stick; but I would not quarrel with Nancy's father, and so made no answer, and, in mortified silence, led my horse past him. But he would not have it that way, and came and took my horse by the head and so stopped me on the grass.

"You vagabond," says he, "I know you now for a great villain, and should lay my stick across your rebel shoulders. How dare you tamper with a Montague?"

"Sir," said I, "a King's Magistrate should speak more temperately. Be pleased, sir, to take your hand from off my horse's bridle."

"Hold your tongue!" says he, "lest I commit you for a thief and press the charge!"

"You vex me," said I. "Have done a-fiddling with my horse. . . . Take your hand from me, sir, or I shall forget your age and dotage—"

At that he made to strike me, crying: "Begone, you vagabond!—you pitiful thief—"

But I caught his stick in both hands and took it and broke it across my knee. And there in the moonlight we stood, breathless and confronted.

"Sir," said I, "am I a vagabond and a thief because I court your daughter without your leave? You shall know that I am a yeoman of this town and am respected here, and you shall do me reason if you still demand that I do the like to you."

"If you do not instantly depart," says he in a towering passion, "I shall fetch my sword and instantly run you through who come here by night to steal a very child from her bed against the King's peace and every law o' the land—"

With that he made for the door—to fetch his sword, or so he said—and I followed, and into the hallway, seeking to reason with this maddened man:

"For God's sake, sir," said I, "have a care what you are about with your threats and your sword. For if I have lacked in customary respect toward a parent, my sentiment toward the daughter is none the less respectful though determined—"

At that he turned upon me and made to take hold of me in his rage: but I fended him away.

"Fellow!" says he, "if you do not know your betters when you see them then you shall be taught your man-

ners by my post-boys in the morning! If I find you here I shall have you flogged—"

At that a candle glimmers on the stairs above, and here comes, a-mincing, a very macaroni in his frilled cap and banyan, a-quizzing us through his spy-glass.

And, "Stab me," says he, in a languid voice, "what a hurly-burly have we here?"

"Why, damme!" says the Judge, "this impudent Yankee yokel comes here under your sister's window to seduce her from every decency and duty—"

"I come honourably to court her!" said I, hotly.

"A very thief in the night!" cries the Judge. "Get you a stick and deal roundly with this rebel oaf—"

"Pierce me," drawls this languid youth, a-quizzing me, "here be two angry gentlemen who seem to differ, but should do so with every courtesy and politeness."

"What!" says the Judge, "am I to use ceremony with this rebel ploughman?"

"I am both," said I, "rebel and ploughman. What do you make of it, gentlemen?"

"Pinch me," says the young gentleman, and, "Lud, lud," says he, a-taking snuff with weary grace; and dusted his nose and fingers with a laced hanker, and peeped at me through his quizzing glass.

"Well, then," says he to his father, "be pleased to retire, sir, for Nancy seems as mad as you are, and is a-packing up her boxes, and vows that this—ah—gentleman is a poet, and shall be used politely, or she will elope with him in her shift!"

"Deal you with him!" roared the old gentleman, "whilst I bring this shameless baggage to her senses!" And at that he gathers up his banyan and mounts the stairs in his bare shanks; and I heard my Nancy cry:

"You shall not so misuse a poet, which is one of God's most noble creatures—"

"Dear me, dear me," says my macaroni, a-dusting of his nose whilst I faced him coolly enough, "—this is

very tiresome—very tiresome at such an hour. Sir, is it true that you are a poet?"

"Also," said I, "I am a man. Concern yourself with that detail alone."

"Quite so," says he. "And have you the time o' night about you? I carry a pair o' watches, sir, but they are not at present upon my person."

I jerked out my fob and examined my watch: "It is half after one in the morning," said I dryly. "Can I serve you further?"

"Plague me, now, what an hour for a quarrel!" said he peevishly. . . . "Sir, did you come to this inn in a clandestine manner to offer insult to my honoured sister?"

"No, sir. Only a very ass would ask that question. I came to pay my honest court to her. And should have asked your father's sanction but did not because of haste. Therein lies my fault—and only fault."

"You seem a man of spirit," says he mildly.

"I believe, sir, there is some trifle of spirit in my humble race."

"And your quality, sir?"

"I know not. . . . Some grandsire's grandsire rode with Oliver in iron and leather, I believe. But what is that to you?"

"Ah," says he with more interest, "the same old quarrel breaks once more! Well, sire, I am at ease. For if our grandsires tickled points, why should not we?"

"I wear no sword," said I coldly, "so tickle the point of your nose with a pinch o' snuff and mind your own affairs."

"Oh, as for that—" he looked amiably at me, then made me a very perfect bow in his banyan; and I rendered him his politeness and chose to overdo it by an inch or so.

"Sir," said he, "did you come under my sister's win-

dow and stand upon your horse to court her, and presently fall upon your proper noddle?"

"Yes, sir," said I fiercely.

"Well, damme, stab me vitals then!" says he, and fell a-laughing; and laughed so that he laid his hand upon my shoulder and then within my arm.

"Lud," says he, "this is like to be the death of me! I would not laugh; no, sir; but when I think on it I can not help but laugh—"

"Whither do you lead, sir?" I demanded; but he was still a-laughing and urging me toward the tap-room, the door of which stood open. And here he sat him down at the end of the long oaken table and we looked at one another till he had done a-laughing, and some three yards of pot-house table between us.

"Come, sir," said he, "I know there be ale in the buttry. Shall we drain a jack before business?"

I seated myself at t' other end of the table:

"What business, sir?"

"Why, ours, damme! My business with you and yours with me, pardie! Where the devil do they draw their ale—"

He set his candle on a table, took two leather jacks from the hooks, went to the bar, drew them brimming, and, returning, offered one to me.

"Sir," said he, "it's Roundhead and Cavalier once more! Have at you in Buckman's ale!"

"To you, sir," said I, and took a long pull, watching him to see what he might do next.

"Sir," says he, blotting the froth from his lips with his hanker, "you drink like a gentleman of parts and—indiscretion!" and fell a-laughing. And, "Lud!" says he, "here is a tall lad and straight as God made any; and though a silver cup lack a handle the cup is still of silver."

"Sir," said I, "what is your further purpose with me?"

"Why, business," says he, "but how to come about

it—" He looked around him through his spy-glass with a languid air, and I could not guess his purpose or what he meant to do.

But presently he espied two pistols over the chimney place, and rose and took them down, and fell to peering into the pan and fiddling with the charges, using ramrod and worm and spilling a little priming, which very carefully he put back.

"God knows," says he, "whether one of these weapons can be discharged, or both, or either. I have a pretty pair o' pistols in my chamber, but dare not seek them now, what with my sister in the vapours and my father's stubborn pride in quality. He would not let me fight with *you!* . . . Come, sir, choose you your proper pistol."

"A duello?" said I, sharply.

"At your convenience, sir."

"Because I love your sister, Nancy?"

"No, sir; because polite custom and honest usage require permission to address a lady. You chose to flout us. You have conducted like any libertine of our own quality. And for that, sir, you shall make amends."

"Sir," said I angrily, "I do not desire to kill my sweetheart's brother!"

"Concern yourself with your own taking off," says he, laughing. "Shall we fill and empty one more cup to the better man before we engage in this silly business?"

"No," said I sourly. Was ever a man so vexed and badgered with this devil's plague of magistrates and macaronis!

"Then shall we sit here and blaze away at one another across this breadth of pot-house oak?"

"Please yourself."

"Well, then, let us sit here and blaze away. Look to your flint and priming. Who knows but these old pistols may explode and blow us both to glory!" And he laughed and looked at the rusty weapon in his hands.

"Sir," said I, "is this a jest, or are you perhaps a little mad?"

"Neither," says he, "but I must despatch this business in one manner or another, and I see no other way because we leave by coach at sun-up."

"I could follow your coach and offer satisfaction in the proper manner."

"How so, sir?"

"With rifles at a hundred yards," said I, watching to see how he would stomach that.

"Oh," says he, "let us finish and have done with it. And I am curious to learn how these ancient pistols will conduct. Come, sir, will you count three? Or shall I?"

"Very well!" said I in a sudden passion, "count and be damned to you for a sorry ass such as never have I seen in all my life till now!"

"You seem angry," says he. "Are you ready for the count?"

"Then have it so if you will. I am ready."

"One," says he; and we raised our pistols and levelled them across the table. "Two," says he in his pleasant voice, and smiled that languid smile at me.

And then, ere he could speak again, comes a rush of a horse outside and a volley of blows upon the shutters.

"Wake up!" shouts a voice; "wake up!" and falls to hammering on door and shutter, and shouting the house awake, and the trampling of his horse jarring the room.

"What the devil is this?" says my macaroni in his drawling way.

He lays his cocked pistol upon the table and goes to the window and unbars the shutters.

"Come, come, my good man," says he, "what is all this noise about?"

"Noise!" shouts a horseman reining up in the moonlight. "—Well, then, you shall have noise enough! The British are coming!"

And with that he lashes his frantic horse and is gone

on; and everywhere overhead in the tavern I hear folk running in bare feet, and windows opening, and people call to one another.

"Philip! Philip!" bawls his father, "where the foul fiend are you and what are you about in this damned nest of Yankee rebels?"

"Oh, Lud," says he, and looks at me with his vexed and weary air. "And our business," says he politely. "Shall we continue, sir, to despatch it?"

"Sir," said I, "this is no time for any man to play the fool. Do you hear those bells? Those gun-shots? There lies my business and not with you. Take your damned pistols and out o' my way! Stand clear there or I throw you out of the window—"

"Gad!" says he, "here's proper spirit! What do you country-folk mean to do—stand your ground?"

"See that you stand yours, too," said I; and ran from the tap-room and out to where my horse stood.

As I set foot to stirrup, all round me in the brilliant moonlight, near and distant, I heard voices shouting and gallop of horses, and the noise of bells and of alarm guns. And in every house candles burned, and folk leaned out from windows and opened doors to call to one another.

A man ran past me—and who he was I never knew —but he called out to me, "Nathan! Nathan! Gallop home and fetch your gun!"

And at that I clapped heels to Trumpeter and beat upon his haunch with impatient fist, and away he started at a farm-horse gallop into the depths of the moonlit night.

One desperate look I cast up at her window as I passed, but saw only a closed sash behind which candles glimmered.

"Oh, God," thought I, "that this should come upon us to-night of all nights in the year!—love, war, and a plague o' magistrates and macaronis!—"

"Bang!" went a musket near at hand, where some

neighbour cleared his piece to tell the world that our King, at last, was marching on us through the night to make us bondmen for all time or do us, presently, to death.

And I kicked with frantic heels upon my horse's ribs and thought of Nancy and King George and of life and love and death.

CHAPTER IX

The Scarlet Dawn

WHEN I got home I went into the house and lighted both candles and stood looking about me as though gazing upon an unfamiliar scene. And first I changed my clothes,—for I had no mind to do battle in my best lest they come to harm and I lack clothing suitable to court my Nancy.

Now I dressed me in my other suit, the same I wore every day. My haversack I hung over one shoulder, and my new-filled powder-horn and bullet pouch over the other. Then I found a flask of new, bright priming powder, and took all my cartridges, new-pared bullets, and buckskin scraps for wadding, and stuffed them into wallet and pouch.

While I was so busied I heard three gallopers pass toward Boston, one after another; and, listening, heard the far clamour of bells, and sometimes a distant horn blowing, or a shot.

Over all fell so bright a moonlight that it seemed rather to gild than silver the darkened world; and I heard cocks crowing far and near in the false dawn, and sometimes a restless wild bird singing in the moon's honey-yellow lustre.

Now into my haversack I crammed bread and cheese and cookies, and the last winter apple, for, thinks I, war should seem like hunting, only that the game be men and neither deer nor squirrel. And so made me ready against unknown events which it is my nature to prepare for, although in love I seem blind and headlong with neither caution nor discretion nor any common sense.

Now, listening and hearing no distant sound of

marching red-coats on the highway, and only the melancholy clamour of bells and deadened gun-shots in the night, I ran to my nearest neighbour, an exempt and too old to answer any district militia call, yet found him dressed in his ancient regimentals and cleaning of his fire-lock by the light of a tallow dip. So I gave him my keys to house and barn and barrack, and he was to feed and milk and water my stock whilst I remained away, unless called for military duty—poor, aged soul!

Then back to my barn, and there fetched a truss and a sack o' grain for Trumpeter, and got my saddle bags and a halter against need.

So I mounted, holding my gun, which was primed and loaded, across my saddle bow, and so galloped back to Lexington through the unearthly splendour of the moon, now well risen on high and burnished like a new-minted shilling which some rascal had dared to clip.

When I came to the common I saw people afoot everywhere, and lights in every house; and at the Tavern I looked up at Nancy's window, but it was darkened.

Outside, on road and common, men moved about with lanthorns, and there were two fat-pine torches burning on the common, and the dark forms of armed men passing and repassing, and now and again a horseman.

In the confusion of darkness, moonlight, and the torches' red and smoky flare, I came upon our captain, Mr. Parker, just arrived from his farm outside the village.

"Nathan," says he, "tie your horse quickly to yonder rail and fall in. There be three ensigns here and no colours; but muskets are better now; so each of you shall tell off a squad and see to it that their muskets and rifles be properly cleaned and charged, and who hath ammunition and who lacks."

"Sir," said I, "it shall be done."

So I tied Trumpeter and ran to the single thin line which he and our lieutenant were forming on the common.

We were three ensigns in our company: Bob Munroe, Joe Simonds, and I; and each took up a lanthorn and told off a raw squad who handled their arms so awkwardly that their comrades stood in greater peril than any red-coat.

Every instant, now, men of our company continued to arrive in the darkness of early morning; and our orderly sergeant and our four corporals were very busy among them.

Our drummer, Will Diamond, and Jonathan Harrington, our fifer, stood near the tavern, ready to beat to arms.

Two men from Woburn enlisted into our rank with their muskets; and everywhere our own men still were coming in from distant homes,—familiar faces strangely white and grim in the shifting lights that played upon them,—and there were Harringtons and Munroes a-plenty, and Browns, and Locks, and Parkers, and Hadleys,—all the old, respectable names in Lexington, —and few who skulked or seemed disaffected in our little town.

Captain John Parker came over to where I stood instructing my squad; and, says he:

"I have sent scouts toward Boston to see if there be any truth in this alarm, but none have returned, which seems strange. And what do you make of it, Nathan?"

But I had no knowledge of such matters, nor had any among us, for all were but raw farmers who never had seen war, save only an one here and yonder who faced the French in '56, or, like to myself, had served in the Boston militia.

"Sir," said I, "if they come, what have you in your mind that we shall do?"

"I have it in my mind to stand my ground, Nathan."

"And stand their fire, sir?"

He said gravely: "I think so. The event must determine how we ought to conduct. If there is to be

trouble, let them begin it, for, under God, I shall not." He walked a little way, turned, came back:

"Mr. Holden, have your men sufficient ammunition?"

"Cartridges and bullets be lacking, sir."

"They are rolling cartridges and moulding bullets in the secret cellar-chamber of the Tavern. Take Corporal Sanderson and go thither."

I halted my men and made them stand at ease. Then I went across to Buckman's Tavern, where there seemed to be many people moving hither and thither, and others watching our mustering on the common.

Into the tap-room I went and descended to the cellar, and so across to the secret room under the parlour, or hall, I know not exactly where it lay—but here, by candle-light, I saw a young woman making cartridges, and another and two men who moulded bullets.

My corporal filled his sack, and I mine, and so returned to the common where we distributed our ammunition.

It had grown a little lighter out o' doors, yet day had not dawned, and there grew a delicate mist along the woods.

It was now some hours since Paul Revere had galloped through the town with the alarming news, and many began to wonder whether the British meant to march at all.

We were but irregulars, without discipline, or experience, ignorant of military customs. Men and non-commissioned officers wandered about a prey to anxiety and doubt. Some left the ranks to visit neighbours; many went into the Tavern for a morning draught, or a piece to stay them, or to gossip and barter news.

Rumour had it that Paul Revere was still at Mr. Clark's house. Some whispered that Mr. Hancock and Mr. Adams would come to Lexington to lead us against the regulars. Others would have it that a scout had arrived out o' Boston, who gave an account that the

town was quiet and roads clear, and no red-coats stirring anywhere.

Many of our men had now wandered away or had gone off entirely; and nobody could hold them for there was no discipline and they went with a neighbour's jest and a laugh, and sometimes with an oath if hungry or in liquor.

All about the common and Tavern our idle minute men stood in groups, some yawning, some few still apprehensive and ears cocked for any noise, yet many remained in the belief that the British had not marched at all—or, if they had, were gone elsewhere.

Now it was very near to dawn, and there came a galloper who said he was from Boston way and saw no British.

About that time some of our men let off their guns for a frolic, or because they desired to clean their pieces and could not draw the charge—I know not why—but there was a small and scattering volley which brought all a-running.

It was a few moments later, I think, that I saw Paul Revere arrive from Concord way and upon a small and sorry nag.

He gave an account how a dozen red-coat officers had stopped him and stolen the horse he rode, which was Deacon Larkin's, and left him this animal in its place.

Further, he said that Mr. Hancock had left a trunk full o' papers in Buckman's, and that he had come to fetch it away. He seemed surprised that the British had not arrived, and said as much to our captain; and then went into the Tavern.

"Nathan," says Captain Parker, "I am minded to dismiss my men. What think you, lad? Shall I turn them loose with leave to go home?"

"Sir," said I, "let me mount Trumpeter and ride out a little way, and do you hold such of our company as you are able until I come again with some more certain news."

"Go, if you choose," said he, "and I shall hold as many as will stay."

Now, as I went up to the Tavern, I saw, behind it, the black servants and the two coaches of Mr. Justice Montague; and post-boys sponging the horses and coach panels, and postillions carrying harness and saddles.

And there, near the wall, I beheld the Judge himself, in his fine cloak; and there, too, was his macaroni son,—the two o' them,—regarding with amused disdain,—or so it seemed to me,—our dingy minute men in line who, God knows, did nothing resemble soldiers.

Then, as I mounted Trumpeter and rode out slowly through the yard, I perceived Nancy standing there alone, leaning upon the wall.

Out o' my saddle I scrambled, gun in hand, and ran to her; and she turned and saw me across the wall, but the backs of her father and her brother were turned toward me.

I came close to her and leaned upon the wall, but could not find any word to say nor any voice either, so fast my heart beat in my swelling throat.

She went a little pale, then rose-warm in the pallid light, then strove to smile.

"And my verse," quoth she, "have you made it?" But her lips quivered and her gaze seemed to melt to mine.

I found my voice then and asked her when she was to set out upon her journey.

"Oh, Nathan," says she under her breath, "what shall become of us now, with you in arms and a rebel, and I to take coach for the Northland within the hour?"

"Dear lass," said I, "swear constancy as I swear it. Let God listen to us, now. Say it, sweet: 'I swear to love you till I die.' "

"I swear it, Nathan."

"Say it," I pleaded.

"I swear to love you till I—I die! . . . God hear us both."

"Will you write to me?"

"Yes. Will you follow?"

"Yes. Give me your hand to kiss—"

"I dare not. Have a care lest my father turn and see you. . . . Oh, Nathan! I truly love and am enamoured! . . . Will you follow our coach?"

"Sweet—I must leave you at this instant."

"Whither do you ride?" says she trembling. And, "Oh, Nathan, why do you ride in arms against your King?"

Ere I could reply I heard Captain Parker calling, "Nathan! Nathan! Fall in!"

I leaped the wall, turned to her—but durst not touch her—and so ran toward the rank where all were running. And, as I fell in, I saw a mounted scout, all slaver and dust, gallop up, and heard him bawling that the British were close upon his heels and already marching up "The Rocks."

At that our drummer, Will Diamond, slung his old Louisburg drum and took his sticks and beat the long roll as loud as he could beat it.

"Fall in! Fall in!" shouted our Sergeant; and he and our captain and lieutenant began to form our front rank—a scant one—but now, from everywhere, our men came a-running to the old drum's thunder.

I was already striving to marshal the rear rank; but there appeared to be much confusion everywhere. Then I saw Mr. Justice Montague go to our captain and take him by the sleeve, and I heard him say:

"Sir, this assembly is unwarranted and unlawful. Sir! I warn you as a magistrate that it is treason when men stand in arms against His Majesty's troops. I warn you as a magistrate—"

Our captain freed his arm and paid Mr. Montague no attention.

"Sir," says our lieutenant to the angry magistrate, "you may go to the devil and take your King with you!

Do you hear, sir! Stand aside, sir, or I run you through!"

"Why," says the Judge, astounded, "this is like to be a riot! Damme, it *is* a riot! Are you all mad to defy the King's troops!—"

But the macaroni son took him by the cloak and drew him to the Tavern steps.

As they passed, the young man gave me a polite bow and a smile; and I heard him say to his father:

"Stab me, sir, but these men seem to stand like very Englishmen. Come, sir, be just. If they are to be drawn, then a sack o' badgers are better armed, for these men have no bayonets."

"Damme!" says the Judge, "would you shout, 'Hi brock!' at such a time, you fop! I have warned them as a magistrate—"

He ceased speaking, for, suddenly, out of the vague morning light rode a British officer superbly mounted.

And, at his heels, without drums or colours, in perfect silence marched a scarlet column of Light Infantry.

He was a handsome officer and young. He halted his troops at some sixty yards distance from our rank, and then he trotted his fine horse toward us.

From his saddle he shouted at us: "Disperse, ye rebels. Lay down your arms and disperse!" And made sweeping gestures right and left with levelled sword.

I heard some of our men leaving the rear rank. Our captain cried in a loud, clear voice: "Stand your ground, men! Don't fire unless fired upon. But if they want a war let it begin here!"

"Disperse!" bawled the British officer. "Why don't you lay down your arms and disperse!"

But no more men left the ranks, and our sergeant was still striving to form the rear one and close it up, when:

"Damn you!" bellowed the British Major, gesticu-

lating with his sword, "Disperse! Disperse! Down with your arms, I say—"

There came a shot—from whence I do not know—but the British officer's fine horse was hit and bounded into the air.

Bang! Somewhere a musket exploded. And bang! bang! went two more, and smoke floated across the British ranks.

At that their Major reversed his sword and struck it violently and repeatedly downward in signal to cease firing, but his measure was either mistaken or ignored, for there came a light volley of musketry, then a very thunder clap, burying the British ranks in smoke.

Men beside and near me sank down or pitched forward or fell back flat upon their backs on the new grass. Then a few among us levelled our pieces and fired into the British smoke cloud, scarce seeing them at all.

I heard somebody say: "My God, here come their grenadiers;" and saw behind the Light Troops the grenadiers' bearskins and brass plates glittering in the smoke, just as the sun rose.

"Fall back, men! Fall back in good order!" came our captain's calm voice. "Steady, men; steady. Get away quietly. We can't face the whole British army."

What remained of our rank sagged back, still firing into the smoke. Suddenly, through it, ripped the red flames of the grenadiers' volley; and straight out of the battle-fog they came leaping toward us with their bright bayonets, cheering as they rushed on.

At that we broke and ran, scattering everywhere through field and garden and orchard to the nearest cover, leaving our dead there on the young grass. And on past us marched the solid scarlet columns, cheering, laughing, hooting, making nothing of us, ignoring us and our scattered shots from distant hills, whither we were sullenly retreating.

Some among us had run into the Tavern and fired

from there; and I among others. My captain, seeing me, called to me:

"Get you to horse, Nathan," says he, "and ride on to Concord, for these red-coats mean to have our cannon and our powder and there may be time to save both if you ride swiftly!"

As I led out my horse I saw Judge Montague, grim and contemptuous, standing near the tavern steps, and Nancy beside him, very white, who had him by the arm. But when he espied me on my horse he shook his fist at me, and:

"Go at your peril," says he. "You see where riot becomes rebellion and how justice overtakes the disloyal!"

As I rode by I looked at my Nancy without a word, and she at me, all tearful and white as death. Then I kicked Trumpeter to a gallop, and pounded away toward Concord town.

And, as I rode, I thought in my disordered mind how that I now had smelled powder and seen men fall dead in battle, and had been horribly afraid, but had not run until so ordered.

And I thanked God fervently for that; and thought of my Nancy; and galloped on.

CHAPTER X

'Round the World

NOW, as I rode into Lincoln, which is some two miles out of Lexington, I perceived a man with a bloody handkerchief tied around his head, seated on the door-sill of a deserted house, and holding to the bridle of his horse.

The man was Will Dawes, and he gave an account how a party of British Light horsemen had caught Paul but missed him.

"Are you bad wounded?" said I.

"No," says he, "but I think my noddle is cracked, for I was thrown off my horse escaping them. Are they marching on Concord?"

"Yes," said I, "and have slain some of our minute-men in Lexington. Did you alarm the villages?"

He said he had done so. He seemed dazed and weary, and I told him he had best go home and have his wife care for him. So he got into his saddle and rode away very slowly and wearily, like a sick man. But he had done good work that day and had rid even farther than Paul, and was chased but not taken.

They told me afterward how he had given the Light horsemen a fright by riding to an empty house and bawling lustily: "Turn out, lads, and help me catch this bag-full o' red-coats that follow me into the trap!"

Well, I drummed with my heels on Trumpeter's ribs and forced him once more to a gallop, which, God knows, he despised, being bred to wagon and plough.

In every direction I heard alarm guns and church bells, and saw men running in distant fields, and now

and again, upon the crest of some low hill, I made out small bodies of armed men marching toward the northwest.

It was a hot, still morning and I was now proceeding slowly, for Trumpeter would no longer gallop, nor even canter, and I was at considerable pains to keep him to a lumbering quickstep—a gait of his own devising, part walk, part canter.

Now, along the road, I overtook and passed men dressed only in their shirts and breeches, but carrying firelocks and some had come from Acton and Lincoln and Bedford to join their companies, where the Middlesex Regiment of Colonel Faulkner was supposed to be assembling in Concord village.

But already I had discovered smoke in the sky; and when I came into view of Concord spires it was plain to me that the British were in the town and busy burning our military stores.

Great volumes of thick smoke were rolling out of Concord village, but I heard neither gun-fire nor the noise of bells; and so great was the smoke that I feared they had fired not only our stores but the whole town, also.

From a little hill I perceived red-coats in the graveyard, among the white tombstones. What they were about, there, I could not guess. There were mounted officers among them.

I rode into a ploughed field, the bars being down, and so to another and considerable hill beyond where were woods.

From there I perceived the river, and the North Bridge, and saw red-coats marching up the left bank of the Concord River. There were red-coats, also, at the bridge, more on two hills overlooking it; others still were moving toward South Bridge and Lee's Hill.

And now, beyond the river, to the northward, I discovered our people on the ridge, marching in a westerly

direction toward a low hill which seemed no more than a quarter of a mile from the North Bridge, but nearly a mile from the village.

It was now nine o'clock in the morning and very hot in the sun, and Trumpeter was loth to travel faster than a walk. Also, I was obliged to make a long detour to ford the river and avoid the British columns; and it was nearer ten o'clock than nine when I kicked my good grey nag to a gallop and arrived at not too contemptible speed among our people.

There were assembled on that little hill the Concord companies of Captains Minot, Nathan Barrett, Brown, and Miles; the Acton companies of Captains Isaac Davis, J. Robins, and S. Hunt; two Bedford companies, Captains Willson and Moore; and Captain W. Smith's Lincoln company.

Just as I rode up, their regimental commander, Colonel J. Barrett, strode out of a group of officers with whom, evidently, he had been consulting; and I heard him call out sharply to his Major, Buttrick:

"Take your men over the North Bridge and into the centre of the town. Proceed peaceably if possible, but proceed at all hazards. If they fire on you, return their fire!"

There seemed to be some difference of opinion concerning which company should march in the lead,—the captain of a Concord company declining the honour,—and why, I know not, for all conducted bravely enough,—but I think their Major misunderstood, for he shouted to Captain Davis:

"Are you afraid to lead this column with your Acton men?"

I saw Captain Davis turn very red: "No, sir," says he in his pleasant voice, "nor is there a man afraid in my command." And at that, and instantly, he ordered his Acton men to wheel from the left of the line to the right.

*Two fifers led, their fifes shrilling out, "The White Cockade."

I had got off my horse and tied him to a tree. As their Major passed me I saluted his worsted epaulettes and asked permission to march with his column.

"What!" says he, "—a volunteer? Well, then, come on with me, young man, if you are not too modest to march in front where our Concord lads have turned shy."

At that he drew his sword and ran out ahead of the column, and I ran after him, rifle on shoulder.

Then the Major, seeing a superior officer of Prescott's Regiment looking on, called out to him:

"Yours is the honour, Colonel Robinson, if you desire to lead these troops."

"Sir," said the Lieutenant-Colonel, "the glory is yours; but I beg a place by your side with your youthful volunteer."

As the march started by twos, the column was led by the Major and the Lieutenant-Colonel. I followed. Then came the fifes. Then, in order, the company from Acton under Capt. Davis; the Concord companies of Miles, Brown, and Barrett, and, last, Hunt's Acton company.

The road wound south, then east; and when we came very close to the river we saw the red-coats pulling up the planks of the bridge.

"Stop that!" shouted our Major, running forward; "what do you mean by destroying that public bridge! Drop those planks and retire!"

At that the red-coats ran back, pell-mell, toward their own ranks, which now we noticed were forming in battle order along the road beyond the easterly end of the bridge.

There came a puff of smoke; two others; and I saw three shots, fired from the British ranks, strike the water —I supposed to intimidate us. Nobody else seemed to notice the splashes.

* Luther Davis of Acton and John Buttrick of Concord.

"Forward," said our Major, calmly, "they are not using ball."

Then a British volley crashed out, and one of our fifers behind me screamed with pain.

That they were in earnest and using ball seemed to enrage our Major:

"Fire! For God's sake, fire!" he shouted.

I levelled my rifle and fired into their smoke; half a dozen Acton men ran out from the halted column and emptied their pieces across the bridge.

I think Captain Davis meant to lead his men across the river over the stepping stones, for I saw him run down to the water and jump to a rock.

Then came another British volley; and Davis fell into the shallow water, and one of his men dropped on the river bank above, with a bullet through his head.

Two others, also, were down, but whether wounded or dead I could not be sure.

We were loading and firing as rapidly as might be, now, and the volleys of the red-coats came whistling and ripping across the bridge.

But I could see, under their smoke, a red-coat lying dead on the river bank, and I counted four of their officers, down or limping, and half a dozen of their men reeling hither and thither like stricken animals in the smoke.

"They're going off!" cried an officer. "Let them go if they will."

Then, as we held our fire to see what they were about, we discovered them gathering their wounded and falling back in a hurry, but in pretty good order.

I do not know why we did not pursue them. Surely not from cowardice. But our officers did not seem to know just what ought to be done, lacking all experience in such affairs.

There was very little further firing. If a shot came from their retreating column, we gave them one or two in return.

So we followed them for a few rods. Then, as they halted, we halted, too, quite at a loss how to conduct. Two of their dead* lay in the road near the Old Manse.

I had left Trumpeter tied to a tree on the hill behind me, and, profiting by the seeming deadlock, I ran back and mounted into my saddle once more, and he and I went ambling down the hill and over the bridge where some Acton men were carrying away the dead body of Captain Davis; and others had more of our dead and wounded—the latter in a chaise, to take them into safety.

Trumpeter's big feet made a thunderous sound upon the bridge. Beyond, I perceived that the British column was now very distant, and that our men were climbing to a ridge above the road.

Up this I forced my horse; and from there I very plainly saw another British column marching to join the column with which we had exchanged shots to so puny a purpose.

Well, we did nothing except take shelter behind a stone wall near a house.

I ventured to ask an officer whether it might not be prudent to attack the two battalions below, before further reinforcements joined them; and I further said that it seemed to me the proper time to drive them through Concord village and hustle them toward Boston.

He agreed with me but did nothing.

It was now getting on toward noon. I looked about me, and I saw that all the hills about Concord were swarming with our minute men,—thousands of them, and the sun glittering on their arms,—men from Chelmsford, Billerica, Reading, Walton, Framingham, Sudbury, Woburn,—even from Stow and Westford. And I began to wonder whether we were to permit the red-coats to march back seventeen miles to their barracks, unharmed.

But now all semblance of military order seemed utterly lost among us. Fragments of companies with or

* One was only wounded and later was savagely murdered by a Yankee non-combatant.

without officers began to go off toward Concord, where smoke still rose.

Not knowing what to do, I followed on my horse. But when I was near the outlying houses of the town a great noise of drums and fifes broke out; and presently we saw the British marching on the Lexington road, and wagons and chaises under escort, doubtless conveying their wounded.

"Well," said I to a drummer of the Middlesex Regiment, who wore the ancient uniform of Amherst's infantry, "if these Concord hornets mean to let them go unscathed, I think in Lexington they'll get a proper stinging."

"I think," said he, "they'll tread upon a bee's nest, yonder, before your Lexington hornets employ their stings."

And even as he spoke we heard gun-shots along the stone walls and fences beyond Merriam's Corners, where a small bridge crosses Mill Brook.

Bang, bang, bang, went the distant firelocks; and then came the regular roar of a British volley.

"I told you so," said the drummer-lad; "the Concord bees are beginning to hum in their ears."

Many of the men on our ridge began to run toward the distant firing. As for me, I thought it high time I should get me to Lexington and join my company before the red-coats passed through on their retreat.

Now, neither at Concord nor at Lexington, nor indeed anywhere at any time during that April day did I see any banner carried by our people or by the British, excepting only one.

This I now noticed by the roadside among a group of armed men—a fragment of some *alarm company, but from where I knew not—and I reined up my panting horse and called them over to me.

"Lads," said I breathlessly, "the red-coats are on the run from Concord, and should presently pass through

* The flag belonged to the Bedford Company.

Lexington by the other road. Follow me and I promise you shall have as many shots at them as you have stomach for! Who's for battle and a dish o' glory!"

"You show us them lobster-backs, that's all!" said an officer hoarsely—or I took him to be an officer, for he wore red worsted epaulettes on a militia coat and a dirty gorget, and carried a spontoon.

"Give me your flag," said I.

The ensign gave it. I set the staff in my gaiter-top and held in Trumpeter, who was conducting like a cavalry charger and no plough-nag.

"Have you breath and heart for the double-quick?" I cried excitedly.

Their officer shouldered his spontoon and pulled his pistol from his belt, ignoring me, and addressing his men:

"Make ready for the command," he bawled. "Injun file, trail arms, dog-trot, marrch!"

At that moment, across the sunny uplands to our right, the far rumour of battle broke upon our ears—dulled volleys, thudding shots, all softened by the distance.

I held Trumpeter to a trot; the alarm men jogged along behind me in silence, save for the heavy shuffle of their worn shoon through the dust. As we marched, everywhere armed men ran from roadside bushes and leaped walls to join us.

When we came near Lexington we were augmented to a considerable company—a dusty, sweaty, mob of men all out o' breath, unshaven, sullenly excited and growling like checked dogs ere the bull is driven in.

I could see a throng of people on the green and about the Tavern and near Harrington's house; and made out a considerable body of our alarm men gathered along and behind the stone wall and near the Tavern steps.

And now, so swift had become the British retreat, the noise of the firing grew very loud and near, and we could see smoke beyond the other road.

As my men crowded around me, breathless, grim, inflamed by the approaching uproar, I heard my name called clearly in a frightened voice, above the increasing noise; and saw Nancy standing at an open upper window of the Tavern.

"Nathan!" she called out, "have you seen my brother? We can not find him anywhere!"

"I have not seen him!" I answered her, amid the increasing tumult. "Get you elsewhere, Nancy, in God's name, for there is like to be a battle here at any moment—"

Somebody suddenly seized my horse's head and jerked it so that he reared, nearly unseating me.

Then I saw that it was Mr. Justice Montague who offered this insult to me in front of everybody, and who stood there, angry and stern, and held fast to my horse.

"Where is my son!" he demanded harshly. "If you or your rabble have done him a harm you shall live to rue it!"

Then I got out of my saddle and went to him and snatched my bridle from his hand; and, with the point of my elbow, I drove him back six paces.

"Sir," said I, still in a white rage under his gross affront, "I have not seen your son. . . . And if again you lay your insolent grasp upon my bridle rein I shall lay you by the heels like any other enemy."

There was an instant's silence, filled with the loud, approaching clamour of battle. All about me was confusion of excited voices and men running, and others crying out this and that and what was now to do.

"Who is that damned Tory?" shouted somebody. And: "Cut him down!" bawls another from the crowd. And another cries, "Hang the rogue and be done with him!"

"Sir," said I, "you anger our people by your arrogance and effrontery. Will you be pleased instantly to retire,—or I can not save your skin."

"No, damme! I will not budge," he cries. "I am a

King's magistrate, and do solemnly protest against this disloyal mob in arms which flouts the peace and security of his Majesty in his Majesty's dominions. Have a care what you are about! Blood has been spilled—"

"Be silent!" I cried; "—there are those here will do you a harm if you hold not your tongue and go about your business!"

"My business is to warn you in the name of law and order—"

"Let him have it!" yelled a shrill voice from the crowd behind the stone fence; and instantly a musket exploded behind me, blinding and choking me with smoke.

When I could make out to see again, Judge Montague lay on the grass, and his hat fallen off beside him.

"Good God!" I cried, "what fool has done this act?"

But all around me grew an angry roaring among the minute men, whether in fierce approval of the bloody deed I know not; nor could I discover anywhere him who had fired the shot.

I bent over Mr. Montague, sick to my very bones, and found that he was breathing. I called upon two men to lift and carry him to the Tavern. They complied in scowling silence.

As we bore him in at the door and laid him upon a sofa in the parlour, of a sudden comes my Nancy a-running into the room; and, at the instant, her father's eyes opened and fixed their awful gaze on me.

"That damned rebel hath done for me," said he, his sickened eyes ever on me.

"Sir," said I, "I did not fire that shot!"

"I saw you fire on me," said he.

"My God, my God," said I in a very horror of bewilderment; and looked at Nancy, who stared at me as white as death.

And, "So," said she, "you have done what you have

done, Nathan. . . . And thus ended all for me and mine. . . . In blood—"

She turned from me with a great sob and fell upon her knees beside her father. And as she kneeled the whole house shook under the thunderous outcrash of a British volley. Through the open windows I saw the common swarming scarlet with British infantry in disorderly retreat,—a raging mass of red-coats driven frantic by our rifle fire, which flickered and darted and lashed out in pricking flames from every tree and wall and thicket.

Around me, now, our minute men were firing upon the British from every window; and, in answer, a ragged volley from the regulars ripped through the Tavern, filling the parlour with plaster, dust and shattered glass and splinters.

I heard my Captain Parker calling loudly to me from the tap-room:

"Nathan! Nathan! Do you instantly collect a squad and carry them to the barn, lest the British storm us from the rear!"

"Nancy!" I gasped, "Nancy! I did not do this thing. I did not fire upon your father!"

She paid no heed where she was kneeling and fumbling at her father's shirt. There was blood on the ruffles and on her small white hands.

"God hear me now; I did not fire upon him," said I again.

The wounded man opened his eyes on me once more.

"You lie," he whispered, and closed his sunken eyes.

CHAPTER XI

Gone to Earth

WHEN I went out of the parlour door I cared no longer whether I lived or died. My swimming brain ached with the explosion of musketry within and the roaring fusillade outside; and the smoke and shouting sickened me.

And, my God!—to be so cruelly accused by that dying man when under public insult I had held my hand—because of his grey head—or because he was *her* father—or both, no doubt—

And now she was my mortal enemy who so nearly had been mine—who had promised constancy—my sweetheart half confessed—

I halted in the choking powder-fog of the tap-room and peered about me in a kind of savage daze, half stunned by the shock of heavy firing where our men stood at every window.

In the smarting smoke I took hold of three or four sturdy fellows who were awaiting their turns at the windows, with rifles loaded; and, pushing and guiding them through the stifling smoke, herded them out by the rear door toward the barn.

And it was here that, for the first time, I beheld their grenadiers close at hand—big, panting, red-coated, red-visaged rascals leaning against the wall exhausted.

Their sweaty faces and their sweat-drenched hair turned their floury head-powder to a running paste that smeared them jowl and chin and stock.

They seemed exhausted; but when they saw us they roused them and strove to climb the wall to get at us

with their bayonets, cursing us for damned rebels with foul and hoarse-voiced threats.

But we ran to the barn and from there emptied our pieces at them; and, when we fired, two of them stumbled as though tripped by the heels. One fell flat on his belly and lay a-sprawling,—the sun shining in a point of white fire on the tin cup at his belt. He was not dead; I saw his knapsack heave and sink on his back. The other soldier lay in the dry weeds by the roadside wall. His big red fists clutched his stock as though choked. He did not stir.

Somebody said: "That has done their business for them bloody-backs."

And it appeared to be so, for the others left the wall and went off as though very weary and careless of their peril from our shots. I saw them stagger away across the common beside the main retreating column which had become but a chaos of scarlet and blinding light where the sun struck on breastplate, buckle and button. They seemed frenzied, and fired in every direction as they poured through the village, crazed with rage and terror, and maddened by heat and thirst.

Until their rear-guard reeled into view, panting and slavering like spent dogs, we stood and shot at them from the barn. But now, hot-foot on the British rear, came swarming a thousand hornets in homespun, to sting this red and monstrous thousand-legged worm to death; and ran behind and along the British flanks, firing from every vantage of cover.

On every hill, from every ditch, flashed our rifles,—our people falling flat when the grenadiers' musketry blazed level and the bullet-storm tore through bushes and dead weeds; then up again sprang our minute-men, creeping swift as hunters who follow a bleeding and stricken beast, still dangerous, which runs on snarling and panting to gain its distant lair before it dies.

When we half dozen alarm-men left the barn we noticed great clouds of smoke rolling up above the trees

along the road, where the British were burning houses and barns as they retreated. Everywhere dead and wounded minute-men and red-coats lay scattered on the highroad and beside it.

As we came into view again of their rear guard, I saw a most desperate fight begin above the road where was a rocky place on a rise of pasture, and a rail fence in front.

And here one of their flanking parties discovered a nest of our minute-men and attempted to clean it out with the bayonet. But that rocky pit instantly became volcanic with musketry and I saw the brave and exhausted grenadiers strive to take it again and again, and stagger back out of that hell of smoke and flame, stumbling, limping, crawling like singed and crippled flies under a burning betty-lamp.

Then, of a sudden, their line caved in and broke and ran, spite of their gallant officers, who struck at them with fist and sword.

And then, as we crept forward, up out o' that rocky hell-pit, there arose a *thing*—a bloody, powder-blackened creature—in the tattered silken frippery of a macaroni. And, oh, my God!—we saw him lay aside his musket and take a pinch o' snuff and spill it up his nose, and yawn and dust him with a rag o' lace. And then and there, the only man left living in that hellish pit, did lift his spy-glass to his eye, and there stood gazing languidly about him down the road, where that roaring torrent of flame and dust receded like some infernal whirlwind through a burning woods.

Now when Mr. Philip Montague perceived us drawing near, presently he seemed to know me, for he waved gracefully his fine white hand all marred with powder stains.

And, "Fast work, sir; stab me, but I never saw a faster pace at any cock-fight," says he politely. And he came down among the dusty pasture rocks to the road where a dozen dead men lay about in the dusty grass.

"Brave fellows," says he, "but come hither on a sorry and disgraceful business, Mr. Holden. Pierce me, sir, but we Englishmen of this our younger England must teach old England better manners. No, no; trespass is trespass; and a man's home is his proper castle. Damme, sir, no man shall force my garden gate, be he king or clodhopper! . . . Stab my vitals, sir, if ever I pay a tea tax either! Pink me if I do! Lud, lud! Dear—dear. Stab me, sir, but we shall be obliged to teach these English what they have forgot—fair play and pretty manners, sir!—and courtesy to us whom they have forgot are also Englishmen!"

Before I could speak the shocking report of a cannon shook the air, and a shell screamed over us.

"Ah," says he, taking snuff, "they are becoming vexed at us."

Again Lord Percy's cannon thundered and another shell soared over us, towered high, curved, and burst above the common behind us.

I went to Mr. Montague and took off my ragged hat, sweat soaked and foul with powder. And never had I thought I should uncover to this young man.

"Sir," I said, "I bear ill news to the bravest man that ever I have known."

He looked hard at me, and very straight.

"Sir," said I, "your honourable father hath been wounded."

After a moment: "Badly, sir?" he asked with composure, but his handsome lips quivered.

"I do not know how badly," said I.

"And—my sister? Is Nancy safe?"

"Yes, sir. And is with your father at this hour."

He brooded a little while; looked at his stained hands, lifted his fine head and gazed at the rising cannon clouds beyond the hill as shot after shot thundered and shook the ground.

"Sir," said I with an effort, "your father believes I fired upon him."

He turned and stared at me in a dazed way.

"Under God," said I, "I did not fire upon your father, Mr. Montague."

He said nothing.

"Someone behind me—some ruffian—I do not know—for your father had halted us—had called us a mob o' rebels—and the men were becoming inflamed to hear the firing drawing nearer—"

He came nearer to me and looked me full in the eyes.

"On my honour, sir," I said, "I had no hand in so base a deed."

"I take your word," said he. . . . "Whatever else you may be," said he, "I know you to be a man of spirit and of honour. . . . Sir, shall we be moving on again? This is a war. . . . Do you any longer choose to brook the insolence of their cannon?"

I gazed at him, astonished.

"Well, then," says he coolly, "let us get forward and gather volunteers; for," says he, "though I am no soldier, I understand that a cannon fired is a cannon that may be taken or spiked or the trunnions knocked off. Sir, I think between you and me we might contrive to take this noisy cannon. . . . And, my God, sir! Consider the long face that my Lord Percy shall pull to see his cannon taken by a mob o' rebels!" He smiled palely at me; smiled upon my four men in his winning, graceful way.

"Gentlemen," said he, "death is but a negligible accident upon the road of Life; but to take a cannon from his British Majesty is a monstrous fine passport to God's Kingdom. Who's for it!—and the man among us who first thumbs the vent takes first my officer's salute and then my hand and heart!"

He seemed to charm them with his ease and smile and the lion's courage of him in his graceful, lazy body.

"Show us them cannon," cried a bettle-browed lout in ragged towcloth.

"With every pleasure, sir," says he politely, "—and by your leave, Mr. Holden?"

"By God," said I, "I ask yours, sir, and but beg the honour to follow where you lead!"

"Sir," says he, "you honour me too much. Gentlemen, kindly charge your firelocks. Mr. Holden, at your convenience—"

He shouldered his musket and took my arm, and we started across the fields toward the cannon clouds, my men following swiftly and in silence.

"Mr. Holden," says he, "you must deem me heartless that the call of the flesh hath not turned me to draw me to my father at this hour. Sir, there is a more imperious summons ringing in my ears—the Motherland in anguish, calling all her sons."

"I understand," said I.

"Yes. . . . But my father never will. If he survive—and God grant it!—never can he understand what I have done this April day. . . . Mr. Holden, have you a father?"

"No, alas."

"Then you must know what pang I suffer at this hour. Every human instinct in me bids me return to him. Every desire and passionate sense of duty drags me back to him. But in my ears is ringing a celestial trumpet; and I must go on. . . . I must go on. . . . Toward those high white cannon clouds that tower against the sky while the earth shakes and trembles and the deep thunder rolls. . . . Sir, if you fall, give me a trust to execute, and I shall do the like."

"Brother," said I, "say to your sister that I did not fire that shot."

"Is that all?"

"And that is all."

He said: "If I fall with one o' their damned bullets letting out my guts, you shall say to my sister that I know you for a man. And dare to recommend you to her

esteem. . . . Where is their cursed cannon that but now was bellowing upon yonder hill?"

Then we discovered it, limbered up, and the gunners galloping, and lashing of their teams in very panic.

"Lud, lud," says he, "how very fast the King of England runs upon this April day!"

CHAPTER XII

The Road to Boston

AFTER we passed the first house on fire, I missed young Montague, and did not know whether he had been hit or had returned to find his dying father at Buckman's Tavern. My men, also, had scattered, each desiring to pursue this curious warfare in his own fashion.

For this straggling fight was no battle. It was no more than a series of individual combats between British soldiers and Massachusetts farmers.

But, during all that bloody retreat of sixteen miles or more, the extremely hot fire that our people poured into that reeling scarlet column never slackened even for an instant.

God knows it was a strange affray there in the dust and heat and sun amid roadside woods in new and tender leaf, fields green with new grass, ploughed land, stone walls, thickets, and swamp and swale.

Nobody was in command of our swarming, sweating, powder-stained people.

There was no strategy, no manœuvre, no attempt to check our enemy, or to head or herd him. To every farmer there it was merely a huge hunting party, and the King's red-coats were the game they hunted.

Had anybody with experience and authority been there to direct and lead us we could have taken them all with ease—grenadiers, light-infantry, marines, flankers, and their two cannon, and Lord Percy himself.

As for Lieutenant Colonel Smith's column, it was done for. All along the road their dead lay,—under

bushes, fences, in gulleys, meadows, ploughed fields,—everywhere heaps of scarlet very bright against the green.

Their wounded they took with them in two-horse carts and chaises taken from farmers' barns along the road; but so many officers were falling that they now picked them up and bore them only to some wayside house and left them.

Why my Lord Percy was not hit seems strange enough, for he rode a fine white horse, and this and his scarlet coat ablaze with gold could be plainly seen even through dust and cannon smoke.

As for me, I experienced every disinclination to fire at this gentleman who was armed only with a sword. It was different with the soldiers who fired back. And mostly, too, I aimed at their gunners whenever I could discover one of their two field pieces, which were six pounders; but whether I hit any of these artillerymen I do not know. But I shot at them in earnest, so enraged was I to discover them setting fire to Deacon Loring's mansion, and his barn and out-buildings. Also, we could see how they plundered Mr. Mead's home and the dwelling of Mr. Merriam. Had I also known then how my Lord Percy's soldiery were to murder poor William Marcy, who was an imbecile and helpless, and little Eddie Barber, a lad of thirteen, God knows I had been at pains to reach him with a bullet; for, once, I had crept down so near to the highway that, lying behind a pasture rock, I could see my lord's fox-face with its veiled eyes and long, sharp nose; and could have fetched him under his gold-laced hat or lace jabot as I chose.

Already, even, the soldiery were beginning to act like wild and harried creatures, in a frenzy, that attack everything they encounter. They burned a little roadside shop where clocks were made and sold; they set fire to the house of the widow who owned it; they burned the home and shop of Joshua Bond.

At Mr. Munroe's tavern they seized an old man, John Raymond, and made him mix grog for them, and then they shot him in the garden.

It was now after four o'clock in the afternoon, and, through the rattle of our steady musketry from every hillside we heard the British bugles blowing down by the tavern, and their drums and fifes played a march. Presently out swept their flank guards, bayonets gleaming, to drive us out o' gunshot of their weary column; and, for a while, we fell back out of rifle-range because we had not a bayonet among us—only a few pikes and a spontoon or two. None the less we continued our hot and ceaseless musketry, and saw many a red-coat drop from their flanking parties, and even, at times, drove them in closer to their main column.

The march of this column through Arlington was marked by a vast cloud of dust nearly two miles long; and here we were reinforced by alarm companies out of Essex and Norfolk—men from Brookline, Dedham, Needham, Beverly, Danvers—even from Charlestown, now, and some come out o' Boston town itself.

I heard an officer from Watertown say that our General Heath had arrived; but it was plain he could do no more than encourage these swarming and undisciplined hordes of farmers; and nowhere did I see even a company maintain its formation, but every man o' them ran out on his own risk to engage in combat in his own manner.

However, since the General's arrival, I did notice how our people pressed closer to the British rearguard, for my Lord Percy's cannon began to flame and thunder once more, and I saw trees splintering and walls tumble, but perceived no other damage to us except for a few gaping holes in barns.

Below Pierce's Hill at the foot of the rocks we passed our Dr. Warren, who seemed to remember me, and smiled, asking me how I did, and, laughing, showed us

all how a bullet had cut away his left ear-lock, saying it saved the trouble for a barber.

Then to us came running an officer from Medford, wearing a cadet uniform, and gave an account how the British flank guard had plundered and set fire to the Tavern and to the Robinson and Adams houses; and how poor, lame Jason Russell had barred his house to the red-coats, saying, "An Englishman's house is his castle!"—and how they had murdered him there in his own doorway, and then slew seven Danvers men who had crept into the house, and four others in the cellar.

That highway into Arlington proved a bloody place, for sixty or more dead men of both parties lay there in their blood, and the red-coats beat an old man of eighty to a pulp with their gun-butts, who fired upon them; and they murdered two other unarmed men whose names I know not, but I saw them with their skulls beaten in.*

It was now nearly six o'clock, and the British had crossed the river into Cambridge where their artillery were again unlimbered and wheeled into battery to drive us from their exhausted rear guard.

I was very tired. Long since I had fired my last charge, and must have given over only for the ammunition I discovered in the haversacks of dead men of both parties.

Through Cambridge the uproar of the fight rolled now toward Charlestown; and here their savage flank guards surprised and slew Major Gardner and two others south of the highway, and also a Mr. Hicks; but these all were in arms against them, and were entrapped through their own ignorance.

All the way down the hill to Cambridge Road the firing grew hotter; many red-coats fell that late afternoon.

It was now nearly seven o'clock and close to sunset;

* Their names were Jason Winship and Jabez Wyman. The old man's name was Samue' Whittemore. He recovered and lived to be ninety-nine.

and the flash of the British cannon grew redder in the early evening dusk.

Dusk deepened, lit by the ruddy and infernal flashes of the British musketry; and the rattle of our rifles had become incessant all around their plodding column.

And here it was, on Charlestown Common, that a soldier murdered the little Barber boy in cold blood.

But here died the last martyr to a frenzied soldiery driven nearly insane by their sufferings. And here the select men of Charlestown engaged that the British troops should not be attacked while crossing Boston ferry if they, on their side, engaged themselves to refrain from destroying the town.

The Somerset, man-o'-war, sent her boats; regulars of the 10th and 64th Foot came over from Boston to guard the town.

As for us, on the hills, we had done with war for the night; and everywhere around me in the dusk I heard our drums beating the retreat.

I did not know what to do with myself, but presently encountered a company of minute men who were marching in pretty good order, led by drums and fifes and a mounted officer in a brown uniform faced with red.

Whither they were bound I did not know, but, it being night, and I very tired and lonely, I fell in with them.

At the foot of the hill were torches burning, and a great assembly of militia officers, some in homespun, others in regimentals of various descriptions,—some even wearing the old scarlet of the Boston city companies now disbanded.

Here, too, was our General Heath and his staff, to whom the militia officers were now gathering for instructions.

I did not know what further to do, so sat down on the grass and ate what crumbs I could discover within my sack.

Our General was forming a guard to take post here.

and officers were setting sentinels along the highway as far as Charlestown Neck.

Very soon, in the darkness, everywhere around me drums began to beat a march; and I saw black masses begin to move as company after company filed away toward Cambridge where, I heard people say, our headquarters were now to be established.

Now, all along the road, and on the hill, watch fires began to blaze up,—hundreds and hundreds of them.

I was chilled and my feet were very weary, but I got up from the grass and began to hobble from one watch fire to the next in search of any of my alarm company who might be gathered there. But they were all strangers to me, and, though some very civilly invited me, I journeyed on in quest of my Lexington company if, indeed, it had been rallied and reunited by its officers.

But nowhere did I discover any man from Lexington, and finally wandered up the road, trailing my rifle, and minded to find some sheltered spot under wall or hedge and there lay me down to sleep.

The road was full of our men, wandering about singly and in groups, and all talking of the fight, and many among them bragging—God forgive them—for theirs was but vain and bloody boasting, and it did sicken me to hear of what they vaunted, and seemed to me more savages than the poor, frantic regulars who slew blindly, I think, for the most part.

For it ill becomes us who are of English blood to believe more evil of our own kinsmen than we dare admit concerning ourselves.

And I know there was a foul murder done by one among us upon a poor, helpless British soldier; and doubt not that our people committed other barbarities. For there be vile and evil folk everywhere, God knows, and it were vain and foolish for us to deem ourselves a company of saints.

Well, as I hobbled along I considered these things.

And presently I came to a narrow road which bore to the left and entered a wood.

It seemed deserted,—the majority of our wandering militia continuing on the highway toward Cambridge, and some lying down in the grass by the stone wall. So, knowing the woods to be a warmer place to sleep in, I went up this sandy, narrow road, casting about for a snug corner under some great evergreen, which always is the warmest spot in any woods.

After a little while I heard a cow-bell ahead; and, mending my pace, presently I came upon a little barefoot maid of seven or eight, in the dark, who drove two cows, and who seemed frightened to see my rifle, but soon grew confident and friendly and told me that she had come to the summer pasture for the cows for fear the red-coats might drive them off.

And now, not distantly ahead, I saw a lighted window.

"Is yonder where you live?" I asked.

"Yes, sir—my mother, who is widowed, and I. . . . Are you a minute-man?"

"Yes, and a weary one."

"You are welcome to a bowl of milk and a hay-bed in our barn."

"How do you know I am welcome?"

"Because we have another soldier there from Lexington, and Mother fetched bread and milk and bade him sleep in the barn."

At that I thanked her. She drove the two cows into the barnyard, closed the gate, then, taking me by the hand, led me to the house.

When the door opened, candle-light dazzled me. But I made out a woman in kerchief, cap and apron, who seemed too young to be this child's parent; and a man in his shirt sleeves, eating at a table.

"Mother," says my tiny maid, "here be another soldier who is lame and hath no food or shelter."

At that the man at the table turned from his por-

ridge and looked at me over his shoulder, using a fop's spyglass.

"Stab me," drawls he, "but here is our saucy Romeo!"

"Montague!" I exclaimed.

"No, Capulet," says he; and up he rises and takes me into his arms.

"What!" says he, "have you the effrontery to remain alive, spite of His Majesty and the British Army!" And so embraced me.

"Where have you been?" said I, taking his fine, smooth hands in both of mine.

"When they halted behind those damned cannon," says he, "I went back across the fields to see my father."

As I gazed at him he felt my hands tremble and held them firmly:

"He still lives," he murmured.

"Is there any chance for him?"

"There was a Yankee military surgeon and his mate—I know not from what regiment of your militia. Also a town physician was there. . . . They found the ball. . . . It had entered *here,*—" he laid his finger on the spot—"and they turned it out *here,* under his right shoulder. . . . He is snug abed, and Nancy at his side. . . . Well, they tell her it is a clean wound and that he is like to recover—if he does not presently die. Maybe, with rest, and with careful nursing. . . . Unless the fever gains. . . . God knows."

"Is he conscious?"

"He did not know me. . . . No."

So deep was my emotion that I could scarce find further voice to bid him hope,—and none at all to speak of Nancy.

The comely widow woman had fetched a dish of milk porridge for me. We took chair at table; and my little maid came confidently to seat herself on the arm of my great ladder-back chair, where she smiled upon us both

and shyly caressed my short hair with little fingers rough from toil.

Her mother sat by the fire and the room was filled with the feathery whirr of her spinning wheel.

Soberly, and in few words, young Montague told me what slight part he had acted on his return from Lexington, having been but one rifle among many that played incessantly upon the British column from the western side of the highroad.

Said he, "This day hath no value, Nathan, unless our bullets have driven into these Englishmen a decent respect for England and the English.

"God knows it went hard with me to fire upon that uniform. . . . It did so. . . . Alas, it is seldom the tyrant but the poor devils who wear his livery who take the brunt. . . . And they were fine young men, those British officers. . . . So calm and brave in the blast from our rifles, herding their poor, bewildered men toward safety—"

He clasped his white hands and rested his chin upon them, staring at space.

"What folly," he murmured, "when England's future lies in this Western World! . . . When our defeat means England's ruin! Blind King! Blind ministry! Blind Fate! . . . Well, we must make another England here. . . . A younger, mightier England. . . . And place the old one in our archives —for those who follow us to read a strange, strange chronicle concerning those whom the gods destroy, and how they go about it."

I had finished my porridge, and now we thanked the comely widow, who still would make us kindly welcome and seemed concerned that there was no other bed save that where she lay with her child.

But we told her we were thankful to lie in the hayloft; so the little maid fetched a lanthorn; and we made our bows to the widow, who rose from her spinning to make us a pretty curtsy.

But when we took leave of our little maid she came seriously to us and embraced and kissed us, and took our hands in hers and led us to the door.

Outside, the night air was damp, and clouds caked the moonlit heavens. Against the sky the barn rose black, and, below, we could perceive the distant lights of Boston, and British watch fires glimmering on Bunker Hill.

There, too, on the dark glass of the stream, lay the *Somerset,* with her battle lanthorns gleaming; and there was a red beacon burning on Copps Hill and another ablaze above Charlestown.

My companion rested one hand on my shoulder and stretched out the other toward the city.

"Yonder, and upon this night," said he, "the rule of England is now ending in this land of ours. . . . And shall be forever ended when the dawn breaks and the shadows flee away."

CHAPTER XIII

Winter Hill

I THINK that never in all the world has any army found itself in so strange a plight as that which confronted His Majesty's forces in Boston during the spring and early summer of '75.

Nor was our own condition any less amazing. For, at that first pistol shot on Lexington Common, all New England flamed; and now her people were here in thousands,—a vast multitude of armed men that ringed themselves around the city, and blockaded it, and the British troops within.

It was neither an army nor was it a rabble, although that was the reproach the British made us. For rabbles have neither discipline nor leaders, and we possessed something of both. But a vast confusion reigned among us, and it was our numbers alone that held the British in the city and saved New England from a most bloody reckoning.

Truly enough, during those first days, Boston was besieged by an armed mob. One heard of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Middlesex Regiments, and of the Essex Regiment, and of others; but the several companies of these regiments marched and manœuvred at will, and each captain occupied the vantage point that most suited his taste.

Of uniformed companies there were few excepting several from Connecticut and the fine Rhode Island army which marched in to us with music and colours and handsome brown uniforms turned up with red. Their tents and equipment were British and they made a singular contrast to other camps.

As for the rest, with few exceptions, homespun was the uniform, although many officers were smartly dressed, and also I noticed soldiers wearing the ancient regimentals of '56, and some in the white and green of France, and yet others in the uniforms of the city companies to which they had belonged before these had been disbanded.

But, on the whole, it was a dingy army that camped in a wide, and irregular ring around Boston. Smock and firelock were the rules; few rifles; few bayonets; no colours; though of fifes and drums a-plenty; and ever the racket of them filling the air in every village and over hill and dale. There were more than 1500 drummers and fifers and other incidentals; and I am ashamed to tell it.

All the rest of New England was there, however;—all the Hirams and Elijahs and Enochs and Abijahs from Maine to Rhode Island seemed to have gathered there,—and every Jabez and Jedediah and Esek and Ebenezer, too. Lord! such a Puritan outpouring of Thine Own Anointed; and every sainted soul o' them convinced that God had fashioned the human nose as an organ to be talked through, and for merely moral sniffing.

Brave lads!—gaunt, hawk-faced, and ungainly,—patriots!—with your shrewd blue eyes and your nut-cracker jaws, and your great, dangling hands and feet! —my people!—for the greater part ignorant, unlettered, unschooled in courtesy and gentler arts,—I never have been ashamed of you, never have denied you, and have ever prayed that in me might lodge a spark of that pure flame that set you marching, naked and unarmed, upon the greatest Empire ever sun has risen on!

Well, this rabble, such as it was, had been posted—or posted itself—in the following manner: the right wing, so called, at Roxbury—some four thousand Massachusetts troops under a General whose name was Thomas.

At Jamaica Plain was General Greene and his fine Rhode Island army; also Spencer's Connecticut infantry

—a well uniformed and disciplined force. They had artillery, too, both field and heavy.

Our centre, under our General Ward, lay at Cambridge,—fifteen Massachusetts regiments, with Gridley's artillery which was not yet formed, and Putnam's Connecticut troops,—and these were in cantonment, using the college and churches; and a few in huts and tents.

Our left wing lay at Chelsea, and Medford; and their pickets mounted guard at Charlestown Neck, Penny Ferry, and Bunker Hill.

Now, concerning myself and my fortunes, and what I saw and what I did, must of a necessity remain the narrative of these memoirs.

This then is what happened: the game being now fairly afoot—or, rather, gone to earth—there was, no longer, any occasion for alarm companies or for minutemen; and all who so had volunteered and served were now returned to their proper regiments.

I, being enlisted in Colonel Proctor's Middlesex Regiment, and hearing that a recruiting party was at Cambridge, went thither accompanied by young Montague; and here he took on when I reported, and we were lodged and baited in the college.

But all seemed to be confusion, for neither rank nor authority could control our noisy soldiery, who understood nothing of military discipline and who became restless and defiant when balked of their own devices.

But there we lay, Montague and I, undrilled, unnoticed for a fortnight, and free to rove at our own sweet will and fed well enough on commons.

Then there came one day to our barracks our Colonel, a tall, fine man, six feet in his stockings, and smartly though neatly uniformed. With him was our General Ward, and the Connecticut General, Putnam, a broad, squat, dingy man with a square, scarred face, who shouted when he talked, and strode about while talking, as though he could not contain the fiery vigour which animated his homely body.

And very soon we discovered what all this to-do was about; for, being an old Indian fighter, what Old Put desired was a body of riflemen or sharp-shooters; and had persuaded our General that such a corps should be formed.

So our Colonel made our company a polite speech, requesting that those expert with the rifle should volunteer for such a corps.

Now in our Province were not many backwoodsmen, or very many people in our population who might qualify as expert with the rifle. We were, so to speak, remote from the frontier; ours was a province unvexed by any serious Indian problem—a Commonwealth of farmers and fishermen for the greater part.

Only young Montague and I came forward; neither of us frontiersmen, but only naturally good shots. For, had we at Concord and at Lexington, and on that sanguinary road to Boston, such riflemen as were bred in Virginia or in Pennsylvania and New York, I can not believe that a single British soldier could have lived to stagger into Cambridge. It was our hunters of squirrels and of deer who did the execution on the 19th of April, and not our untrained militia, among whom, God knows, were many who scarce knew how to bite a cartridge or prime a pan.

Well, Old Put looked sourly upon us, and presently took himself off to his Connecticut troops; but our Colonel sent us with a sergeant to Winter Hill, where they were beginning a redoubt. Here we found a small company of men quartered in a barn, who every day went down to the Mystic River to practise sharp-shooting.

And here, during the month of May, we remained, undisciplined and idle save for our daily rifle practice, and commanded by a fat captain who had a sweetheart in a farmhouse six miles north of us, and who troubled us seldom in consequence.

It was a dull life, and idle; and food and rumours were plenty.

We read the newspapers; we learned of the arrival of troops from Maine, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island; of redoubts and batteries and trenches and breastworks being made by our people; of the frivolous behaviour of the regulars in Boston.

Sometimes we walked abroad to gaze down upon the city and the water, where their warships lay. We made out *The Falcon,* off Moulton's Point, and *The Somerset* at the Ferry. Also we discovered *The Lively, The Glasgow,* and *The Cerberus,* and several floating batteries.

In our rifle company were some fifty men of my Province,—for the greater part uncouth and unlettered, but kindly folk in their rough and simple fashion, and mostly married men and poor.

I had feared, at first, that these silent and sometimes sullen folk might neither like nor understand my comrade, Montague. But we had not lodged among them a week e'er he was their idol—for, what with his frankness and simplicity and unfailing courtesy, and his gaiety and ready laughter, he first aroused their curiosity, then quieted their suspicions, and finally amused and conquered all. His drawl enchanted these grim men; his simplicity disarmed them; his good-humour amused them; his amazing skill with a rifle won their respect.

In some Provinces—nay, in all—military knowledge and rules were contemptible and lax. Many militia companies elected their own officers. And this irregular corps in formation now coolly demoted their fat Captain and sent him back to Sudbury about his business. Then, without asking leave of anybody, they had a secret meeting and voted me their Captain and Montague Lieutenant, and so informed us.

We had a barrel of beer that night. And, strange to say, although hitherto these folk had shown no respect for military rank, and had addressed their fat Captain familiarly by his given name and merely grinned when rebuked, now they discovered a rough, sullen, yet shy respect for Montague and for me, and gave us our mili-

tary titles when addressing us, and offered no familiarity.

More than that, they even requested instruction in saluting, and when it should be done; and, to our amaze, desired drill and exercise in evolutions.

I had among them a sergeant who had served in '56 and at Fortress Pitt, a silent old man who had seemed a very sloven.

But at roll-call in the morning I stood in admiration to see how neat and clean and straight he stood, and how submissive were my men at drill.

Also they looked pretty well in line, now, because Old Put had caused our General to procure for us rifle frocks of tow-cloth, and trousers of the same, over which we wore leggins close fitting to the belt, and fringed on the outer seam.

This odd uniform, known on frontiers as the "rifle dress," was held in considerable respect by the British soldiery since Braddock's regulars retreated, and the French were driven from the Lakes.

Well, it served; and was better than no uniform at all. But, although we practised across the Mystic with our rifles, and drilled, and strove very earnestly to become a respectable and military company, few noticed us at all, and some folk jested at and derided our dress; and our company received no commission, nor did we two officers.

At that time it was not in anybody's mind to enlist riflemen as a separate corps, but, in the event of attack, to distribute us among the intrenchments as sharpshooters.

This we did not know at that time; and, indeed, learned it only on the eve of our first battle which then was called The Battle of Charlestown, but since has been known as The Battle of Bunker Hill.

On the day before that very bloody battle,—concerning preparations for which we riflemen on Winter Hill had no slightest information or warning,—my comrade and dear friend, Lieutenant Montague, had received a

letter from my Nancy—alas, no longer mine since that brutal attempt upon her father—and we went together into the orchard behind our barn-barracks, and there, seated beneath an apple tree, he read to me his sister's letter which she had writ him from Buckman's Tavern in Lexington:

"My beloved Brother," she wrote in her neatly-shaded penmanship of a young girl not long out of school, "our dear father still lives and is now rid of the pernicious fever which, save for the mercy of Almighty God, must long since have ended so fatally.

"He lies here in his bed, so weak and white and still that at times terror seizes me and I bend over him in a very agony of doubt, not knowing whether he be dead or living.

"If he notices me I am not certain that he knows me. He neither speaks nor stirs; and when his eyes open they seem so strangely quenched and all the fire gone out of them. Thin and grim and grey hath he become in sickness since that brutal bullet struck him down where he did his duty before God and by his King—" I winced at that; and my comrade laid a steady hand on my shoulder; and continued:

"He is well enough here, and can not now be moved at any rate. Here he must lie for many days to come, and no hope of travelling North.

"For that reason I have not written to our uncle Ashley in Schoharie, nor do intend to notify him at present of our plight, for it would be useless to disturb him with our anxiety and sorrow; and if, being loyal to our King, he dared venture hither, it must be to no purpose, for he could do nothing for our father that is not done every hour of every day, and would ever be in peril of arrest.

"When you were here on leave of absence two weeks ago, you saw our Dr. Holman. He is a rebel, but good and kind, and he comes morning and evening, and oftener if he deems it necessary or thinks to ease my mind.

"And it is because he is an upright man and truthful, and bids me hope, that I dare bid you, also, hope. It will be long, he says, but he sees some progress. I hope this worthy man may remain here until our father is beyond danger, but he may be ordered to some rebel regiment at any time; for these corps are recruiting in every town around us with a vast deal of fifing and of drumming and strange folk, in worsted epaulettes and sashes full of pistols, a-galloping on highways. Also a noisy company in our tap-room every night, boasting and vaunting and a-singing of rebel songs.

"And oh, brother of my heart!—how shall it be when our father becomes stronger, and when he asks for news of you?

"How shall I tell him of your mad adventure? How confess the folly that hath seduced you to stand against your King to flout him?

"I can not tell him. I will not. If the time comes that I must tell him you are with the army, then he will never dream that you are with any army other than our King's. Let him believe it until God gives him strength to endure the truth.

"Now, in these idle hours, I have fashioned for you that rifle-frock you asked of me—which, I learned, is but a smock of tow-cloth with a cape to it, and to be belted in.

"This I have contrived for you, dear brother, and have fringed it in Indian fashion, sleeve, cape, and skirt. What a strange dress for a soldier, sure. And what an odd appearance must your company present! . . . Brother, I have made *two* rifle-frocks. . . . Lest any other soldier among your company be lacking. . . . or any officer. . . . Because I would not have you shamed by lack of clothing in your company."

Montague looked up at me, soberly intent:

"Nathan," he said, "for all her stubbornness and hardness, and turning a deaf ear to me when I insist on my belief in you,—in spite of this,—I think my sister made this other rifle-frock for *you*."

"No," said I gloomily. "She might stitch my shroud, perhaps, but nothing more. . . . With his last, conscious breath your father gave me the lie. He said he saw me fire. . . . Never can she forget that; never entirely believe otherwise."

"I wish," he said, "you could have caught the beast who fired."

"Yes," said I wearily, "but I never knew who did it." We had said this already many times to one another. Now he looked at me very gravely. Sometimes I wondered if he also really doubted me.

After a silence, and gazing hungrily upon her letter: "Is there more?" I asked.

He read on: "In the newspapers I read of rebellion everywhere in every colony—of disorderly gatherings in New York, in New Jersey, in Maryland.

"It is plain that many of our own Virginians are boiling over; and there is no mistaking Colonel Washington's mind; and what his designs may be I scarcely dare to guess. But if *he* draws sword against our King, then what you already have done may seem less terrifying. . . . Well, God's will be done on earth. But this rebellion already has cost me dear. . . . I have no more paper to write on. I send two rifle-shirts and two haversacks, with this letter, as the post wagon for the rebel army passes through Lexington at noon.

"I send you all the love of a wounded and lonely heart. And am, dear and honoured brother, with every affection, civility, and duty,

"Your adoring sister,

"NANCY."

He ceased and sat with unsmiling visage, the letter on his knees.

"Is that the end?" I asked.

"The end, Nathan."

He folded and pouched her letter; and I watched him in silence, who could have knelt and kissed every inky word she had writ him.

"Well," he said, "the packet has arrived; and I laid across your bunk one rifle-frock and one haversack. . . . Sound thy ranger's whistle, my Captain, for it is the hour for rifle-practice, lacking one short half minute."

I drew a buck-horn whistle from my pocket, glanced at my watch, then blew three long blasts upon it, and one short one.

That evening, after guard-mount, I lay upon the straw in my bunk and pillowed my face upon the fringed rifle-shirt that Nancy made. God, how lonely a heart was mine that ached and ached for her, sometimes; sometimes for my mother.

I do not know how long I lay there—ours being a little room fashioned out of a box stall—when my comrade opened the door.

"It is a fine night and strangely still," said he. "Shall we walk abroad?"

I rose; and we moved slowly out among the apple trees, his arm around my shoulder.

"This is a pretty world," quoth he, "and I would not willingly quit it for a better. . . . How soft is this June air. How warm seems Mother Earth that so snugly broods us human chicks and covers us with darkness as with wings. . . . Brother?"

"Yes?"

"Have you ever loved any woman other than my sister?"

"None."

"How strange. I have loved many. And you had best begin a record too."

"No; I am well enough without women."

He laughed: "You should go to London."

"It would make no difference," said I. "I am done with love."

We walked at random among the apple trees.

"How far away seems Death," he murmured.

We stood listening, but could hear no sound around

us in the starlit darkness only the faint cheeping of some dreaming, unseen bird.

"I wonder," said he, "whether there be aught more lovely in those heavenly pastures—" He looked upward at the stars and fell silent. And after a little while he took my arm and we went slowly back to our barrack-barn, and so to bed.

CHAPTER XIV

In Battle

IT was, I think, a few minutes after one in the morning when I was aroused from a deep sleep by a lanthorn shining in my eyes.

Sitting upon my bunk I perceived Major Woods, of Colonel Prescott's Middlesex Regiment, and, beside him, Captain Maxwell holding a lanthorn which had been darkened.

Montague, also, had been awakened; and now we both stood up in our night-rails out of respect.

"Sir," says Major Woods in guarded tones, "have your company of sharp-shooters received their commission?"

"No, sir," I replied.

"Have you and your officers?"

"None, sir."

"Well," says he, "no matter. General Ward has ordered out three Regiments of Foot and Gridley's artillery, to make us a redoubt on Bunker's Hill. They marched from Cambridge and passed the Neck,* and now are busy on the hill. . . . We shall need riflemen. What is the present strength of your company?"

"Sixty rifles, sir."

"How many fit for duty?"

"Sixty rifles, sir."

The Major seemed surprised: "Captain," says he, "Colonel Prescott desires you to detail twenty of your sharp-shooters for duty on Bunker's Hill. You shall command them in person and march them with all secrecy

* Charlestown Neck was an artificial causeway.

and caution by the Neck road, over the Neck, and so to the hill. You shall beware of the floating batteries in the Mystic and shall proceed with no noise and no talking in the ranks, and shall carry a dark lanthorn to guide you."

"Sir, it shall be done."

"Thirty rounds, packs and blankets, and rations for twenty-four hours," said he. . . . "And if any ship discovers and fires upon your party you are forbidden to notice or return the fire."

"I understand, Major."

He made a gesture of caution, then he and Captain Maxwell went out with their lanthorn, and I heard them getting to horse and riding off at a swift gallop.

We lighted a candle and dressed us very quickly in our rifle-dress which pulls over the head and has laces at the throat.

Montague ran out to discover Hartwell, our first sergeant, and I spread my map upon our camp table, to freshen my acquaintance with this same hill.

Here it was, marked very plainly, a low, round hill of some hundred feet in height, with a number of trees growing upon it, and connected by a ridge with another hill for which there seemed to be no name,—only the fields designated, which were Breed's Pasture, and Green's, and Russell's.

Our road to it from Winter Hill ran nearly south by Ploughed Hill.

Now I laid aside my map, slung on Nancy's haversack, my powder horn and bullet pouch, and, taking my rifle, went out into the dark orchard.

Here, already, our twenty riflemen were aligned in a single rank, and were strapping packs and blankets, Lieutenant Montague having inspected them.

He came and whispered to me that all was in order, and gave me my rations of bread and cheese and a wooden bottle full of water.

Sergeant Hartwell led by six paces, carrying a dark

lanthorn. I followed; then Montague, then my riflemen in single file.

When we came near the Common under Cobble Hill, and were passing the mill-pond, we began to file past other detachments marching in the same direction and in silence,—squads from Prescott's and Bridge's regiments, Connecticut infantry, a field gun said to belong to Callender's battery, and some fatigue companies carrying shovels, picks and crows.

At the Neck two officers, Major Brooks and Captain Nutting, halted us, supposing us to be a detachment to reinforce *the town guard, then motioned us forward in silence.

A broad highway leads over Bunker Hill, and the ascent is not fatiguing.

And now, in the starlight, we crossed Bunker Hill and came out upon the crest of the other hill, where a thousand men were busy digging. They made amazingly little noise. Now and then a pick clinked on a stone or the blade of a shovel scraped. Nothing more. And there was no talking anywhere.

There seemed to be several general officers there, and, when day broke, I recognized Generals Ward, Warren, and Putnam, and our veteran engineer, Colonel Gridley.

But Colonel Prescott seemed to command, and it was around him that the field officers gathered for instructions.

Well, we halted and formed a single rank, standing at ease and gazing now at the working party, now out across the starlit water where the beleaguered city lay.

Presently there came to us Colonel Prescott himself, who smiled when he noticed our rifle-dress.

"You shall place ten men in this redoubt when finished, Captain, and your Lieutenant shall command them." He pointed with his naked sword: "Down there runs a stone wall topped with rails. There is a fatigue party now extending it and covering it with cut grass.

* Set in Charlestown along the water front to observe the ships.

You shall take the remainder of your riflemen and distribute them along that breastwork."

I gave him the officer's salute; he turned and said to Colonel Gridley: "Certainly a mistake has been made; it was Bunker's Hill we should have fortified. Something should be done there, Colonel."

They moved away in earnest conversation.

I turned to Montague and gave him my hand, wishing him every good fortune.

He retained my hand a moment.

"When you and I are old," said he, smilingly, "this day should provide us lively fireside gossip—or I miss my guess."

"I have no doubt of it," said I.

And so we parted; he telling off his men along the edges of the ditch, wherein the men were working; I marching my ten men down through a dark orchard and across a hayfield to a low stone wall on top of which were set wooden posts and rails.

Along this I distributed them, and they squatted down on the hay, their rifles across their knees.

Behind them were lines of stacked muskets; and the owners of these continued very busily to stuff hay and grass between the rails atop the wall.

What I myself saw of the Battle of Charlestown Hill, which now is known as the Battle of Bunker Hill, resembles little of what descriptions I have since read about it.

But that, necessarily, must be so, for a soldier sees only what passes before him in his vicinity, and knows nothing of what occurs on either hand.

Therefore, this narrative of my first battle must seem meagre to a people who already know the events and the full history of this sanguinary day in June.

But I think it better that I relate only what I myself saw, and leave the full account to those better qualified.

It was not yet dawn when Colonel Richard Gridley's

artillery drove up through the long grass, and two guns went into battery behind our fence.

I was lying on my back under an apple tree, a-thinking, and did not hear them coming but felt the ground begin to shake under tread of horses and jarring of guns and caissons.

I got up to observe them, how the cannoneers wheeled their gun teams, dropped their trails, and rode to the rear with their caissons and forge. The other batteries continued on down hill.

It seemed to be a full battalion of artillery, and I knew these must be the batteries of Captains S. Trevett, Foster, Callender, and S. Gridley.

One battery wheeled and returned to the road leading back to Bunker's Hill. Such of their officers as passed close to me seemed to be very young, notably the battery captain who commanded the guns behind our fence.

He* came up to where I was standing—a handsome youth of fine figure in his new uniform, but seemed strangely pale and nervous and ever anxious.

"Captain," said he, "the cartridges served out to my battery are too large for my guns, and we can not ram them home. Have you any sacking?"

I had seen some sacks for earth, piled near the fence, and advised him to help himself. He went there, but the engineer officers declined to let him have the sacks; and I saw him striding to and fro in the starlight, and plainly in great apprehension and distress of mind.

It was now a little before daylight, and already cocks were crowing from distant farms.

By the dim light I could see that our intrenchments were now full six feet high where our men were still labouring.

At earliest dawn, as I was instructing one of my riflemen, there came a sudden clap of thunder in the still

* Tried by court martial and broken for cowardice. Volunteered and was restored to rank because of magnificent bravery at the Battle of Long Island.

air; and, below us, a war-ship's top-mast loomed above a hull buried in smoke.

As we looked there came a flash from her sides, and another, and others, shattering the silence of that calm June morning. Dawn had revealed our works, and *The Lively* instantly opened fire on them.

Over us came screaming the cannon balls; but I had heard Lord Percy's cannon at Lexington, and our men, being protected, worked on, making platforms of plank to stand on, and now at no pains to work noiselessly or speak in whispers.

Presently, however, a private in Bridge's regiment was killed. I did not see him fall, but heard the ball and saw men running.

There was no panic among these raw troops, but the men seemed pale and uneasy. Then I saw Colonel Prescott step coolly to the parapet and stroll along it, now directing his men in their labour, now stopping to chat with officers, and sometimes making a jest of the bombardment; and all with so gay a humour that I heard men laughing where he passed. And in a little while our people became indifferent to the cannonade which now had so increased in violence that all the hill trembled under the thundering concussions.

From Copps Hill British batteries threw shell at us; all their ships and floating batteries were now in terrific action.

The day was magnificent but the heat soon became excessive; and whether I stood in the trenches or lay flat in the grass my body was drenched in sweat.

All that morning the British ships and batteries continued to bombard us. We paid no attention. At noon I ate dinner and then visited my men. At one o'clock Old Put came up on his nag and made our people throw their working tools into some carts, which then drove up toward Bunker Hill.

On Bunker Hill, now, I could see that our men had begun to throw up a breastwork, which seemed to me a

sensible business, though begun too late; because there, to my mind, should have been dug our fortress and not on the lower hill.*

Standing on the parapet, not through bravado but out of curiosity, I could see into Boston very plainly across the water, and made out light-horsemen and dragoons galloping furiously through the streets, and foot regiments mustering and marching to and fro; and other regiments halted by the water side where lay a number of barges, and others rowing thither.

I said to Captain Callender: "That would seem to foreshadow an assault on our works, sir."

He seemed very nervous. About that time our field artillery fired seven shots from the redoubt,—I know not with what effect†—for presently that battery descended the slope at a gallop and dropped its guns in alignment with ours and to the right where was a swampy stretch and no defences.

About this time, on the water below us, long scarlet lines of British troops were in plain view embarking in barges from the Long Wharf and from the North Battery.

Never have I seen so brilliant a spectacle as this mass of scarlet all a-glitter with bayonets, gun-barrels, the brass of the artillery. Everywhere sword-hilt and gorget blazed in the fierce sunshine; oar blades sparkled; a blue flag flew from every ship; the roaring cannonade redoubled its thunder.

On came their scarlet-laden boats in perfect interval and order, headed for Moulton's Point. And there we saw them disembark, always in splendid order, officers, horses, artillery, and infantry; and never had I beheld so admirable a manœuvre or discipline so faultless.

They seemed to have their music with them but I saw

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* A mistake if not a positive disobedience. The orders were to fortify Bunker Hill.

† The raw, undisciplined American artillery was poorly served that day. Only during the second British assault at the rail fence was it effective. During the retreat only one gun was brought off.

no colours. Nor within our lines could I discover any flag of any description.

About this time Colonel Proctor called me and showed me where to set a stake in front of our defences, and sent a soldier to fashion one from the lumber left by our carpenters.

For a long interval the British troops which had landed below us stood at ease in their formations. Their barges had gone back; but very soon we perceived that more troops were disembarking, and, through our glasses, knew them to be the marines of Lexington, and grenadiers and light-troops.

I now took the pointed stake they fetched, got over the parapet, and drove it into the ground in front of our breastworks.

"There," said Colonel Proctor, "is their dead line."

When I returned and was watching the boats, an artillery officer came down the hill to Captain Callender, with an account of how Captain S. Gridley's guns were being withdrawn behind our right flank to fire on the ships.

At that Captain Callender ran over to his own guns and ordered them to open fire; which they did, choking us all with their fumes and smoke; but the cannoneers had so much difficulty in reloading after sponging that their inexperienced battery Captain seemed to lose his head and ordered up the gun-teams with their limbers:

"Sir," said I in astonishment, "you surely do not mean to abandon this position!"

"Either that or abandon my guns," said he, white with worry and excitement, "and if I lose my guns I shall be broke!"

He would not listen, being obsessed with responsibility for his damned guns; and had already hooked up one when up tears Old Put on his fiery nag and orders him back.

"General!" cried Callender, "I can not ram home the cartridges they issued."

"Well, by God, sir," cries Old Put, "you shall load with a sack o' lollypops, if you like, but you shall not bring off your guns!"

And away he tore on business of his own—for he was a bawling and a busy man that day, and never did I spy him but at a tearing gallop and shouting encouragement and curses where the fire was hottest.

"They're coming," said somebody in a low voice.

I had been watching poor Callender and his gunners, who strove to ram home the swollen cartridges. Now I turned to look over my shoulder at the British.

Long, undulating ranks of scarlet were moving up the slope—wide, steady waves of it flowed toward us,—other waves were reaching out at the foot of the redoubt.

The spectacle was superb. Their officers led them; their drums timed them.

Shoulder to shoulder they came on through the high grass, the sun a sheet of white fire across their gun-barrels and breast-plates.

From time to time they halted, delivered their fire like a single thunder clap, loaded, marched forward.

Our officers walked calmly about among our men, telling them to aim at their belt-buckles, save powder, hold their fire till they could see the whites of their eyes.

I heard several shots from our redoubt and saw an officer run out along the parapet and kick aside the muzzles of the guns.

Then I went from one of my riflemen to another, saying as quietly as I was able in my curbed excitement: "You are to wait until they pass that stake out there. Fire at the handsome coats—fire on those covered with gold lace.

"We have no more powder than we need. It won't do to miss. If you shoot straight they'll never reach this fence; they'll never use their bayonets. . . . Hold your fire, lads. I know you can shoot the eye out of a squirrel at this range. It isn't that, but our orders are positive, and I wish my sharp-shooters to set an example

of good discipline. Watch that stake. When they reach it, fire."

Never have I known, and managed to master, such excitement as now possessed me. I do not remember that I felt any fear. I did not notice anybody there who seemed afraid—save only poor Callender; and his terror was lest he lose his precious guns, and nothing tainted of personal cowardice.

"Oh, God," says he, repeating it like a very child, "they give me cartridges that do not fit my guns!"

His gunners were ripping them open and filling handkerchiefs and neckcloths and even stripped themselves of their shirts and tore them up to make some sort of powder sack.

Now I looked over the breastwork, then laid my cocked rifle across the top rail and drew it to my cheek.

There was no order given. A second or two elapsed, then came a most awful outcrash of musketry.

Through our smoke I saw their entire front line go down.

After that I am not clear. A roaring shout arose from our men, then another fearful crash.

They were brave men out there in the smoke. They returned our fire—strove to face the blaze of musketry —then sagged away, wavered, ran.

Through the smoke I could see the long, scarlet windrows of their dead. Then my ears were deafened by the outburst of our cheering. Up and over the parapet leaped our men, seeming crazed with astonishment and joy.

There was a very bedlam of excitement in our trenches, what with men cheering, singing, whistling, shouting to one another, and officers laughing in their relief after so terrible a tension that had strained every nerve to the breaking.

My riflemen seemed cool enough, smiling grimly as I passed among them and regarding with amusement and some disdain the frantic joy of their comrades.

One shaggy, beetle-browed old veteran of the Lakes —a rifleman named Lewis—winked impudently at me and shrugged his big, caped shoulders:

And, "Hell," quoth he, "this is but a turkey-shoot compared to what we gave the white-coats—and what we took from them that bloody day along the lake."

"Wait," said I, "till our folk have done a-crowing; for your bull-dog and your red-coat are of the one breed, and they'll be back again to prove my words."

Scarce had I said it when up walks Colonel Proctor:

"Men," says he, "they are re-forming to return. That need not disconcert you. They can not reach us. They are ours when we deliver fire. And this time you shall wait until they are only five rods away. *Five rods!* No farther. Remember. This time we'll get them all."

He nodded and smiled at me and made a gesture. So I went over our parapet, drew out the stake I had set, and, pacing off five rods, set it again in the bloody and trampled grass.

When I came back I felt somewhat sickened, so thickly lay the dead men out there, so horrible the blood-wet grass. But all along the lines our men were busy among the British dead, rifling their cartridge boxes for ammunition and searching in their knapsacks for food—no provisions having been sent us, though promised, and many companies had marched with empty sacks.

There came again the thud of hoofs, and Old Put comes pounding along, and he shouts at Callender:

"Give 'em the guts of your guns next time!" And off he gallops, hatless, coatless, a brave, untidy, and faithful patriot who, in my opinion, was no genius and never became more than a somewhat useful General.

We now were hardened to the cannon; but some recruits came to us who evidently were most terribly frightened by the noise of the artillery—poor lads—for a number were fair sick of it, and yet endeavoured to play their parts like men.

One boy of fifteen leaned near me and let go what

he had eaten; and I put my arm about him and talked so pleasantly that he wiped his face and laughed.

But now, all along the line, arose an angry sound of voices; and I saw that their battery of howitzers on Copps Hill was playing on Charlestown and that the houses on the square had been set afire by the shells.

Vast clouds of smoke began to roll up from the doomed town, but the wind carried it away so that, if the British had hoped to use it for a screen, they hoped in vain.

They had rallied, now, and reformed, and were marching once more upon us,—the same steady, dogged, unbroken waves of scarlet, all glittering with bayonets. God! What a brave and fearful sight!

Never had anybody in America beheld a spectacle so terrific, what with the burning town, the war-ships firing, land-batteries, floating batteries,—and that great scarlet wave advancing all agleam with steel,—and the calm blue splendour of the sky overhead!—

On they came, shoulder to shoulder, coolly stepping over the dead bodies of their comrades, straight at us over the grass.

When they reached the wooden stake there came the flash and shock of our discharge, and the awful blast of it seemed to hurl them down hill. But those dauntless officers, sword in hand, checked them, urged them back; and they closed up their bloody ranks and came marching back again.

Again the blazing devastation of our musketry drove them back; yet that splendid infantry rallied once more and faced us, and started toward us for the second time.

Then, such a horrible volcano of flame enveloped them that those still alive turned and fled—even their officers —some running frantically as far as their boats and actually climbing into them. The grass in front of us was red with dead men.

Our cheering rolled from one end of the peninsula to the other; the parapets were thick with shouting men

waving hat and weapon, and beside themselves to see the soldiery of England run.

Very few among us at the rail fence had been killed or wounded, spite of the flimsy breastwork. There were, however, a number of unfortunates—though none among my men—and I saw them carried away toward Bunker Hill.

On that same hill, also, there seemed to be some confusion, although order reigned in the redoubt and along our fence.

What was the nature of it I could not make out. Old Put was there a-horse, and raging; and staff officers galloping. I spoke to Colonel Proctor concerning the excitement and he told me that a few of the infantry reinforcements ordered had just come up, but none of the artillery, nor had any ammunition, provisions, or water been sent, and that the raw troops were complaining and wished to leave the hill, having been all night and all day on fatigue with no sleep and no refreshment.

That, truly, was a source of confusion; but a discovery far more serious was beginning to disorganize our people.

I first realized what was this vital and fatal trouble when I saw officers taking the artillery cartridges out of the caissons and opening them and distributing the powder to the infantry. Our powder was nearly spent, and none had been sent.

I questioned my riflemen and discovered that they had sufficient to stop another attack; but Colonel Proctor told me that few of his men could boast three rounds and many only one.

I went up on the hill to see if I might draw a share of the artillery powder. I liked not what I saw, for the regiments arriving seemed undisciplined and few companies held together, but the men behaved as at Lexington, running out to find shelter behind rocks, haycocks, fences, apple trees, scattering themselves everywhere.

Men seemed to come and go as they chose. Dozens

loitered around a wounded man; scores wandered down toward the Neck to watch our troops cross under the raking fire of the British ships.

Callender, deeming his guns useless—as, indeed, they now were—was limbering up. Major Gridley had not arrived. So great a throng had gathered around the artillery caisson, clamouring for powder, that I could not shoulder my way in to secure a single gill.

And now, everywhere, officers and troops who had not been in action nor had heard a bullet save on the causeway, began to move off, saying there was no powder and that none had bayonets, and that there was nothing more to be done here.

There came a squad of these—and I shall not name their regiment or their officer—but I blocked their way on the cartroad and strove to persuade them to stand. But as they would not listen, and their officer became insolent, I took him by his dirty neck-cloth and told him he was a great villain and that I had every inclination to break first his sword and then his head.

He twisted and squirmed and wrenched himself free, leaving his cravat in my hands; and then they all ran down the hill, where I hope a chain-shot from the ships taught them more of war than they seemed desirous of learning.

Now there was a very mob of perplexed and distracted soldiery on the hill and all a-milling around the caisson like minnows swarming around a crumb of bread.

And suddenly a cry went up: "The regulars are coming! Look sharp!"

"Stand your ground! For God's sake, stand!" bawled Old Put from his saddle; and other officers, mounted and afoot, took up the rally-cry, and ran after those who retreated and pulled back some and menaced others with sword and pistol.

I got up on the parapet of the redoubt and saw that

those long, red waves were again in motion below and were now flowing more swiftly toward us.

Looking about me for Montagué I presently espied him at the sally-port, and saw that he had collected and massed his ten men around him. He saw me and waved his hat very gaily; and I waved mine.

"That is well done!" I shouted through the din, "and I shall do the same!" But I doubt he could hear me in the hubbub.

Now I ran for our rail fence and blew my whistle to collect my men, who heard it and all came to me from where they lay distributed along the line of battle.

I had time only for a word before the first volley from our people rolled out across the fence. Then, through the smoke of it, I saw a wilderness of bayonets; saw our men rise out of the grass and shoot into this wall of steel and strive to beat it back with clubbed muskets.

Then, with a great shout and clash of steel, the British infantry crashed through; and all along the fence began a furious fighting, body to body, stock against bayonet, into which my ten riflemen and I poured our last remaining bullets.

It was a scarlet deluge that flowed over our breastworks and overwhelmed us, beating us down, piercing us with steel, trampling over us to seize our cannon; and they had not fired a shot—nor did I hear or see one. All was done with a roar and a rush and a frightful clashing of polished steel.

I made toward the redoubt with my riflemen, where already I saw a British officer hoist himself up by grasping an apple tree that grew out of our parapet.

As we entered the citadel, I saw Dr. Warren retreating very leisurely, and priming his pan as he moved back.

And there I now beheld the first British flag that I had seen that day—a flag in distress and wildly agitated—wave and swing as though in agony; and around it my riflemen in their tow-cloth, fighting to seize it like a pack of wildcats.

No sooner did we perceive this combat than we rushed toward it. But already Lieutenant Montague had seized the lance and had wrenched the colours from their silver rings.

"Hurrah!" I yelled; "first flag taken!"

But the next instant the parapets became but a stormy sea of bayonets that broke over everything and swept us out of the redoubt.

I saw Dr. Warren fall; I saw Montague go down, still clutching his flag.

"Philip!" I shouted. "Philip!" and beat my way to him with my empty rifle and drew him to his feet.

Of his riflemen and mine remained six; and these so raged and stormed around us that a way was cleared so that two of us contrived to carry him through the postern and down the road.

Behind us and all about us a very hell of battle raged. Philip still clutched his British flag, but it was all wet and blackened with his blood, and I knew my friend was dying.

Down the hill-road, hurled along by the horrible riot of retreat, we were carried, carrying him. The only gun saved that day came lashing and lurching behind its galloping team; our infantry ran behind it; mounted men drove by, their horses on a dead run.

On the causeway which was swept by the fire of the ships we became exhausted, but made out to stagger across, losing only two men.

It was in our barn on Winter Hill that my comrade died.

He said to me: "Well, Nathan, our cause is safe." And closed his eyes.

"Yes, safe," I said. But my eyes were blinded by my tears.

His eyes opened, presently: "We stood well," he whispered.

"Yes, Philip."

"It was their damned bayonets. . . . And we had none."

"Yes."

"No matter," said he, "—as long as we dared face them with empty firelocks. . . . No matter. . . . Our liberties are safe."

I nodded, but could not utter a word.

After a little while he looked up at me and smiled. I bent and kissed him on his bloody face.

As I pressed his hand he was still smiling at me out of his dying eyes.

After a minute he gave a very gentle sigh, and his soul passed.

CHAPTER XV

Sunset and Dawn

BLEEDING men, crippled men, men carried on bloody mattresses and planks, on fence-rail litters, on wooden shutters, filled all the roads, streaming away across the country west, north and east.

Squads, companies, regiments were assembling by roadsides, in fields, on hills, and some were marching away toward Cambridge and some to the eastward. Stragglers swarmed everywhere, wandering about to seek their comrades or to find a well or a truss of straw in some barn, to lie on.

The golden light of that June afternoon seemed to be shaking under the thundering concussion of artillery, where the British ships still swept the Neck with shot and shell.

Amid the confusion and the crowds of troops, twelve of my riflemen had found their way back to our barn behind the redoubt on Winter Hill.

When I came out of the barn I saw them in the orchard where also were gathering wandering and passing soldiers of many other regiments.

I went across the grass and told them quietly that their Lieutenant was dead and that we should convey his body to Lexington.

As I spoke there came shouts and a cracking of whips, and up the hill came horses harnessed to the only gun of Gridley's artillery brought off from Bunker Hill.

The drivers in their saddles swung their whips and yelled; the gun-teams were fresh enough but the wheels cut deep in the soil.

Alongside it rode a General and his staff—Ward, it

proved to be—and Pomeroy was with him and Colonel Proctor.

As the gun-teams rested I heard the General direct the drivers toward the redoubt—pointing with his sword—and Colonel Proctor rode up to my riflemen and rendered me my salute.

Said he to me: "An express from Virginia came in today, who brings news of a rifle regiment under a Colonel Morgan—the Eleventh Virginia, I think—"

He leaned toward me from his saddle and lowered his voice:

"If these Colonies mean to make a common cause of it, your company might furnish the Virginians with valuable material. Therefore it would seem the part of wisdom that you hold your corps together. I believe the General desires it."

"I shall hold them, sir."

"How many rifles have you?"

"I had sixty, Colonel, and two officers. Fifty remain fit for duty,—and one officer."

"Yourself."

"Yes, sir. My Lieutenant lies dead in that barn. . . . Colonel, may I take him to his family on yonder caisson of Major Gridley's artillery?"

"How far?"

"Lexington."

As the Colonel hesitated:

"He died bravely, sir," said I.

"Surely—surely—"

"His father and his sister are at Lexington, sir. He was an only son."

"Very well, sir." He wheeled his horse and spurred over to where the field piece and the teams rested under the apple trees, and spoke to the captain commanding.

Then the whips cracked and the teams wheeled and trotted toward the redoubt where the gun was dropped and run into the sally-port by the gunners. The caisson completed the circle and came to a halt by our barn.

I took a sergeant and eleven men. We lifted the body of my comrade on a trundle-bed, carried it out into the late sunshine and placed it on the caisson, securing everything with rope.

The General, Colonel Proctor, and the staff were riding by, and all rendered this dead man a marching salute, then clapped spurs and galloped away toward Cambridge.

I feared they might demand the British flag that my comrade had taken; so I waited until they had gone, then folded the banner, placed it as a cushion for his head, and over all laid a soldier's blanket for a shroud.

A great throng of loitering soldiers were now clustered around the caisson. Seeing among them a drummer and a fife-major of the Rhode Island army, I asked them to volunteer for this duty, and they agreed to do so.

In a few moments I arranged the cortège and we started. The fife and drum led, playing Roslyn Castle. The caisson moved next, and on either side marched six riflemen with reversed rifles.

I followed, unarmed, carrying my hat in my left hand.

As we started, the booming of the ships' guns shook the hill. It was near to the longest day in the year, and its blue splendour had scarcely waned. A cloud of dust drifted like golden vapour along our road where many stragglers were moving, too; but all gave us way.

And every solemn and weary step of that long march I was thinking how, under God, was I to acquaint my Nancy with this awful news; and how was that sick old man to bear it.

There was still a tint of rose in the summer dusk when we came into Lexington. I had made our music cease playing as the caisson slowly drove across the common and drew up by Buckman's Tavern.

Around it, now, swarmed women and children and old men, and some few soldiers. The landlord came from his tap-room and met me at the door.

"Is Miss Montague within?" I asked.

"No, sir. . . . Who is this dead man you bring to us, Mr. Holden?"

"Her brother."

In his clutch the stem of his long clay snapped. He cast the pipe from him and stood twisting his fingers and staring out at the bier.

"Lord," he muttered, "this is like to be the old man's death. . . . He is doing better, sir, since he heard the cannon down Boston way. . . . Yes, sir; he took notice and sat up a while on his pillows. . . . He has been sleeping since sundown."

"Where is Miss Nancy?"

"Why, after supper she went out across the green to seek news. Many were gathered there, and all day expresses have been riding through. . . . Is it positive that the day is ours, Mr. Holden?"

"We held our own to the last gill of powder. They took the hill then."

A servant-maid came from the kitchen to tell me that my Nancy had been noticed on the Concord road, walking there alone as though to take the air.

So I ordered my men to stand at ease and ran down and across the green.

Clear twilight, tinged still with rose, possessed that still village, and no candles yet lighted; and very soon, on the Concord road, I perceived a solitary woman moving slowly toward me.

She did not know me in my rifle-dress till I came very near. Then her hands flew to her breast and clasped where the kerchief was knotted about a wild rose.

"Nancy," said I in a low voice, "won't you speak to me?"

"Yes. . . . I am content to see you. . . . All day long I have thought of you—hearing the cannon. . . . Is Philip here?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At the Tavern."

She came nearer and looked at me, her lips a-quiver with relief.

"Nathan," she said, "I am content."

"Lean on my arm."

"No."

"Have you so great a horror of me, Nancy?"

"No. . . . I promised my father that I had done with you for ever. . . . I dare not touch you, Nathan."

"He forced you to that?"

"Yonder he lies. Stricken by rebels. It would be the death of him if ever I loved a rebel. Shall I slay him? . . . . And so can not trust myself—too near you. . . . Shall we go?"

"Do you still believe I fired upon him?"

"No. But what with his contempt for you and hatred for your cause—it would have been the death of him had I refused to promise him never to marry you."

"I understand."

"I pray God you do. . . . Where, in so cruel a circumstance, lay my duty? To him, or to you?"

I did not answer.

"Nathan?"

I looked at her out of sombre eyes.

She said: "I may not dare to love you,—for all the natural inclination in my mind and heart that urges. . . . How can I seek happiness—hope for it—amid ruin and bitterness, and the outraged honour of a father to whom I owe duty to the end?"

She had clasped her hands while speaking; and now I took them into mine.

"Nancy," I said, "it was not of love that I came to speak . . . but of its enemy. . . . The enemy of life and love."

"What enemy—"

"That Dark Messenger of God who, one day, visits all."

"Nathan—"

She fell a-trembling; and I drew her arm through mine.

"M-my father?" she stammered.

"No."

"Oh, Nathan! Not—not Philip!—"

After a little while: "Yes; I have brought him home."

For a moment her whole body sank against the arm supporting it. A little longer we stood there in the June darkness. Then I felt her quiver, and straighten up, and hold to my arm.

"Philip?" she whispered.

"Yes. . . . Gloriously."

"Oh, God!"

I guided her slowly across the green. She perceived the caisson, now; sank back against me for an instant, then drew her slim body erect, and, steadily, resting on my arm, walked toward the bier and those waiting men.

"Courage," I whispered.

"Yes. Our race does not lack that, Nathan."

She left my arm and walked to the blanket-draped caisson where my riflemen stood at rest, leaning on the butts of their reversed guns.

She said to me in a tearless voice: "All the long afternoon my father has listened to the cannon and talked of Philip."

"Did he know his son was in battle?"

"Pray, sir, where else would a Montague be? And my father never dreamed that his only son stood there in arms against his King. . . . Let no one undeceive him in this hour!"

"No," I said.

She stood, biting her under lip and struggling for self-control.

"Ask them to bring him in," she said.

I gave the order in a low voice. Nancy had already entered the Tavern. There was some delay. And when, at length, shouldering their burden, my men carried the

dead into Buckman's Tavern, I saw Nancy on the stairs, who beckoned us to mount.

"My father knows," she said in the same strange, tearless voice.

"You told him!"

"Who else should tell him but his daughter?"

"Is he overcome?"

"No. I told him my brother died fighting for his King. . . . We know how to face such strokes as that But we die under dishonour. . . . Bring my brother. in."

"Into your father's chamber?"

"Yes. He desires to see his only son."

At a motion from me my men set down the trundle-bed. Very gently I drew the blanket-shroud and laid it aside. Then, from under Philip's head I took the British flag and unfolded it and, with it, covered his body.

I said to my Nancy: "Under this flag he died. It is doubly fitting that this banner cover him."

She thanked me; two men took up the bed; she followed into the candle-lighted room.

When my men returned I closed the door and descended with them to the porch where now were many silent people.

"To-morrow," said I, "we shall bury Lieutenant Montague. Sergeant, stable the horses, lodge your men and feed them—and the two gunners also. Park your caisson in the barnyard."

The throng made way for the horses; the drummer slung his drum and he and the fife-major followed my riflemen into the Tavern, where already they were spreading food on the tap-room table.

Long before midnight all were abed except myself, who sat in the parlour where they had laid out the dead man, and where such offices as were required had been decently accomplished.

About eleven o'clock they had fetched a coffin—the best to be had. And now my comrade lay there in his

fine, white shroud, with that faint and lazy smile seeming to touch his lips—and, when the candles flickered, it was truly as though I saw him smiling with his eyes closed, as though better to enjoy some jest—

His folded hands clasped the gilt hilt of his own court sword, and rested on the British flag. And so, smiling, he lay there in the parlour, and, on the sofa, I sat with my head between both hands, watching him smiling in the candle-light.

About three in the morning I heard the door unclose, and my Nancy entered; and I led her to a seat.

"My father seems strangely calm," she said. "Sometimes he sleeps. Sometimes, when he wakes, we pray. . . . And he hath voiced gratitude to God that his only son did draw sword for God and Sovereign."

"It is a mercy that he so believes."

"Yes. He had died of it otherwise. . . . Never must he know. . . . And when we leave this place where were born all our disasters, there will be nobody to undeceive him. . . . Nathan, in this town of Lexington every human mischance has come upon us. . . . Even—love."

She rose; walked to the bier; stood for a long while gazing upon her brother.

Presently I heard her voice, low but clear:

"Philip, you knew I loved this man. . . . And counselled duty and honour. . . . But the last time you came you spoke only of patience. . . . Of duty and patience. . . . So I understood that this man, your comrade, had become dear to you. . . . And I dared hope. . . . But hope dies with you, Philip, my brother. Its dwelling place is where your soul stands, brightly, and near to God. . . . Only duty remains. . . . And no man or woman of our race ever was afraid to face it."

She stood for a few moments more, touched the hilt of his court-sword where his clasped hands lay; then turned and seated herself again.

She did not look at me, but she said: "Nathan; the cause of Colonel Washington may be respectable but my father and I can not embrace it. And when my brother drew sword against his King, then, in that hour, alas, our family's ruin was certain. My brother lies dead. My father's cause must remain mine."

Then she took her face in her hands and sat with head bowed, unstirring, till the first sleepy bird awoke with the first faint glimmering of dawn.

CHAPTER XVI

Gloria Mundi

FROM earliest dawn the day before, the cannonade had never ceased.

Through its solemn, distant reverberations, church bells were sounding now, the day being Sunday. And on this morning we buried my comrade and friend.

It was a sad, strange scene—drum and fife leading; the coffin on the caisson; the riflemen marching with reversed arms; my Nancy walking beside me behind the coffin.

Our muffled music played "Funeral Thoughts;" my Nancy's head was bowed, but her step did not falter. It was a hot morning; and, though the sun shone, there was a hint of storms.

We marched from the burying-ground direct, my Nancy desiring to remain alone beside the new-made grave.

She gave me her slim hand to kiss, asked me to thank my men, desired a word apart with the sergeant, and then walked with me to the little gate, out of which the gunners drove their caisson, followed by my riflemen and the music.

The air was oppressive, thick and moist, and was full of the thunder of the cannonade.

Nancy leaned on the gate. She seemed pale and weary, but I had not seen her weep.

I ventured to ask how her father did, and she said that the blow, instead of crushing him, seemed to arouse him; and that he was sitting up in bed and impatient for the time when strength permitted him to resume his journey north.

"It is that way with our race," she said; "every blow

fate deals us strengthens us in our intent. His mission is from his King."

"What is his mission?"

"He goes to Canada as legal adviser to the military authorities. The situation concerning the loyalty of the French Canadians is delicate.

"From Canada he goes to my uncle, Sir Ashley Montague, at his seat in the north of New York Province."

"Where?"

"In Schoharie. Ashley Court is the estate."

"And then?"

"I do not know."

I felt my heart breaking. "This parting, then, ends all between you and me," I said.

"It ends hope. . . . Not memory."

"Shall you remember me?"

"All my life, Nathan. . . . My brother loved you. . . . Good-bye."

We parted so. She walked back toward the new grave. When she had gone I put on my hat and went out to the road.

"No music till we are beyond hearing," said I.

A mile from Lexington our music struck up a rollicking march called *Soldiers Joy* and my men stepped out to it with a real good will that surprised me until my sergeant told me how Nancy had thanked him and given him a purse of guineas to distribute among all the soldiers who had marched so far to do honour to her dead.

It was three o'clock when we came to Winter Hill, and found a Connecticut regiment fortifying it and their tents everywhere around our barn. Both the British ships and batteries were still bombarding our posts and throwing shells into the still smoking ruins of Charlestown.

Now our works on Winter Hill, while spoken of as a redoubt, never really had been more than marked out

by our engineers. There were parts of a ditch and low breastwork; a few timbers set for a sally-port; bomb-proofs staked out; and rods set for what certainly had been designed to be a very considerable fortification. But, save for a corn-crib in which was some powder and also a few provisions, and the few tents and shanties to shelter a sergeant and twenty men, our barn until now had been the only solid construction on Winter Hill.

For this reason, I suppose, no shells were fired at us; but a number had fallen in the orchard since morning.

It began to rain and thunder about four o'clock; and the British cannonade gradually slackened and died out.

On Bunker Hill I could see the British busily constructing a redoubt, nor did the rain stop them. They seemed to have a guard on the Neck, and at the Point and the old ferry.

A Rhode Island officer on our hill told me he had counted ninety dead bodies still lying along the rail fence. Through his fine telescope I observed how our people were making a strong fort on Prospect Hill and another on the Roxbury side.

The rain ceased toward six o'clock with a distant roll of thunder in the east and the British cannon began again firing toward our lines in Cambridge.

My riflemen were very idle, loitering around the fatigue parties and doing no work, or gathering on the edge of the hill to watch the bombardment. So I paraded them and gave them a good hard drill; and was preparing to lead them a practice march out Cambridge way when there came galloping a staff officer from our General Ward, and with him another mounted officer in deer-skin rifle-dress trimmed with fur.

At that my men opened their eyes, and the staff major called out to me: "Is this Captain Holden's company?"

"Yes, sir," said I, rendering him his salute.

"Are you Captain Holden?"

"Yes, sir."

Then, with much civility, he made me known to the rifle officer, a Pennsylvanian, whose name was Darrell.

"Captain Darrell," said he, "is ordered to take over your company and set out with it for headquarters immediately."

At that I went as red as a pippin and stood dumb and confused to see myself so despoiled; but the staff officer dismounted and said to me in a low voice:

"No, sir, no slight is meant. Is there not some place where we may retire? I bear a confidential message from Mr. Hancock."

I motioned toward the barn and he led his horse thither, I walking on the other side, and vastly annoyed.

In the barn were our armourer and a sentry, but I cleared them out and offered the officer a seat on my bunk, and sat down beside him. Thereupon he delivered to me a letter from Mr. Hancock:

"My dear Captain Holden,

"Your company of rifles and yourself are soon to be properly commissioned; but you are to be detailed for particular duty and your corps joined to the Pennsylvania battalion soon to arrive at Cambridge. Captain Darrell of that corps will take over your command at once.

"Perhaps, sir, you are not aware that your late mission to the Loup d'Orange, or Stockbridge Indians, has borne fruit.

"That is the case. The intentions of the British Indian Department have been frustrated. The war-belt, carried to them by Lieutenant Walter Butler of the Indian Department, has been returned to Colonel Guy Johnson. More than that, a company of minute-men has been regularly embodied among these Indians, and is now on its march to Cambridge to join this army.*

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* This company of Stockbridge Indians served bravely during the irregular warfare around Boston and became a terror to the British outposts. Later, at the Battle of White Plains, they fought as gallantly as any troops present.

"But, sir, I foresee that some day we shall require trackers and runners who, bred in the forest, understand such arts.

"I foresee a great war, Mr. Gray. It began at Lexington. God only knows where it shall end.

"I foresee the day when all our American colonies shall stand united and in arms under a single command, commissioned by a common or Continental Congress.

"That is the event I await with every confidence. We shall have a vast frontier to guard. Even now, along this frontier, the horizon darkens and flashes with the menace of tempests yet unchained.

"Sir, the behaviour of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Colonel Guy Johnson, is become very strange. He holds council fires with the Iroquois, and none may stop him or question him or call him to account.

"He* pretends to have news of people from this Province who are to march to Guy Park and seize his person.

"On this strange excuse he continues to move westward along the Mohawk River, holding councils with his savages on pretence of usual and necessary business. But I am not deceived. I long have suspected Colonel Johnson's intentions; and I desire to learn whether this gentleman is using his important position, influence, and office, to gain the savages for the King's cause,—or what truly he may be about on the New York frontier.

"Sir, I know of no Indians loyal to our Province save only those Loups d'Orange, persuaded to our cause by yourself. We are obliged to you for your efforts which have given to our army a company of troops.

"But, furthermore, we shall soon require the services of Indians who, living in a wild state, may be employed, under an officer, in such tracking and scouting as the developments of our situations may require.

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* Possibly Guy Johnson honestly believed that the "Boston People," as he called them, "were preparing to march and seize him and put a stop to his activities in behalf of the Crown.

"Therefore, I desire you to secure, if possible, the services of several such Indians, and attach them to your person; and, further, be prepared to undertake such especial services as I have mentioned heretofore.

"For the present you will attach yourself to the military family of General Ward at headquarters in Cambridge, and there await further and confidential instructions from the Provincial Congress.

"I am, my dear Captain, with much esteem, your obliged and humble servant to command,

"JOHN HANCOCK."

CHAPTER XVII

The Lines

MY duties at headquarters were irksome. I seldom went out of the house at all, but sat all day writing at a camp table, and half the night, too.

On the lines was excitement and a plenty to do. Not an hour but the cannon thundered and small arms banged away; and more than once in Cambridge the drums beat to arms, and there was gallop of officers and rattle and clank of artillery, and great shouting that the British were marching out. They never came; and I continued to copy orders.

One Sunday during those remaining days of June, I had a few hours' leave to ride to my home in Lexington. There I made arrangements for a Mr. Holmes, a neighbour, to occupy my house and use my land and stock to his own profit during my absence.

This accomplished, I rode on to the village to pay my respects to Nancy at Buckman's Tavern and to make civil inquiry concerning her father. She had gone to church in the family coach, and I had not time left to go there in search of her or to await her; but learned from the landlord that her father had mended more rapidly than seemed possible, and soon meant to journey northward, bag, baggage, footmen and outriders, and the two great coaches in which his family and household had arrived.

Indeed, as I mounted and rode away, I saw the baggage coach standing in the Tavern yard, and two blacks a-tinkering one wheel.

Well, I spurred on, carrying as sore a heart as ever any young man bore within his breast.

For all, indeed, seemed ended. I was now persuaded of that. Never could such a man as was Mr. Justice Montague endure such a man as I, whose quality he despised, whose politics he abhorred, who, in his consideration, was no more than an indentured servant.

Loyal to his King, devoted to the King's cause, what had such a man to say to rebels, save what he had already said?—and near died for the saying.

What had such a man of Southern quality—or aristocracy—to say to a Massachusetts farmer, save what he had said so scornfully to me?

And, alas! where lay my Nancy's duty if not to this man? Fate had stricken him. God had taken his only son. All his pride, all his hope of future happiness on earth was now quenched forever. It was the House of Montague that fell at Bunker Hill. Only the Montague courage remained—never extinguished in such men as he. Armed grimly with this, death in his heart, this proud old servant of his King went on about the King's business. That remained the only business in this man's life—that, and to guard his daughter, who, in the enchantment of an April moment, had let her blue eyes rest on me to my undoing. . . . A moment's April madness under the moon; no more than that. . . . Had it cost her any tears? Not likely. It had cost her some shamed reflexion, perhaps—chagrin to remember her condescension—that a woman of her race had been so lightly moved.

So, in dark and bitter mood, I rode into Cambridge and got me to my damned camp table and fell, once more, to scribbling, chafing and impatient as the deep rumble of the cannonade assailed my ears, and horsemen galloped, galloped, to and fro along the stony streets.

On the 2nd of July, about two o'clock, arrived General Washington, of Virginia, in our camp. I heard the cheering and trample of light-horse, and, raising my eyes from my writing, saw folk running up the street.

The next day our army paraded and His Excellency

took command. I could see our motley regiments with their music and oddly assorted colours, marching past my window, and here and yon some very elegant officers, and a few regiments in blue and red,—these mostly from Rhode Island.

That evening, at supper, our General Ward informed us that now we were to become a real army; that the Continental Congress had taken into their pay and service all the troops of the several colonies to weld these into one Continental army; and the troops of each Provincial line should constitute this army.

His Excellency now arranged the army into three divisions of two brigades and twelve regiments each.

My Major-General Ward commanded the right wing and his Brigadiers were Spencer and Thomas, with ten Massachusetts regiments and three from Connecticut.

So to Roxbury we went, and there went also my damned camp table, so I was no better off but sat all day writing and mending quills, and must so continue even when, now and again, a British shell exploded within my view.

I remember one day, when first I had the honour and extreme pleasure of gazing upon His Excellency.

Dr. Thatcher was standing by my window while I sat copying some hospital returns, when he called to me to come and view General Washington.

His Excellency was on horseback with numerous military gentlemen.

I was scarcely prepared to recollect so noble a man. Tall, finely proportioned,—the gentleman and soldier so agreeably blended, he towered in his saddle above all. Dignity and modesty marked every feature of his calm and humane face.

He wore a blue uniform with buff facings, buff underdress, glittering epaulettes, and black cockade.

He rode with ease and sat his saddle to perfection. I did not see him smile, but his expression seemed mildly

grave and amiable as he exchanged words with the mounted officers about him.

It was, I think, in July that the battalions of Virginia and Pennsylvania riflemen began to arrive in our camp—great, stout, hardy men dressed in white rifle-frocks and round hats.

The shirts of one battalion were of brown Holland, and double caped, and on the breast, in capital letters, was their motto, "Liberty or Death."

Another company was dressed in leather trimmed with opossum fur; another wore buck-tails on their hats; others were all in fringed buckskin, wearing caps of raccoon with furry tails hanging down behind, and carrying the flag of the Eleventh Virginia Regiment. The officers' rifle-shirts were trimmed with this fur, and the men's shirts bore the device, "Liberty or Death."

I chanced to be crossing the road near to the college, carrying an armful o' damned blank-books, when this regiment marched into Cambridge and halted in a long line.

And, as I was passing, His Excellency and his staff, galloping that way, pulled up.

"What men are these and from where do they arrive?" demanded His Excellency of one of their officers.

"From the right bank of the Potomac, General," replied the officer who wore a cocked hat and a rifle-shirt with triple capes.

At that His Excellency dismounted, grasped the officer's hand, and then walked along the halted line taking every man in turn by his hand.

"This is well done," said he; "you are all neighbours of mine; your regiment is welcome in this army."

I stood awhile watching this scene, and strangely moved to see these great fists grasp His Excellency's white-gloved hand, and their freckled and sunburnt faces all shyly grinning under their coonskin caps.

That night my General Ward said to me that a commission had arrived for me as Lieutenant in Captain

Hawkes' company of the Eleventh Virginia Regiment, and I could scarce eat or drink for the joy of it, so content was I to be a lieutenant in a regular regiment instead of a staff-captain of irregular rifles.

I lost no time in assembling and packing my small military chest, in taking leave of my General, and in reporting at Cambridge to my new Colonel and my Captain.

Colonel Daniel Morgan was a hearty, sturdy, rough looking officer in buckskins, with a kind smile and manner.

Captain Hawkes was tall, dark, wiry as an Indian, with little black eyes and aquiline nose, and a mouth that had a dreadful sort of lurking grin.

He wore his black hair cut close under his coonskin cap—indeed, all the privates in the regiment were close clipped, and only a few of the officers wore their hair clubbed and powdered.

I did not know whether I should like my Captain, so devilish and dark a face was his with that ever-lurking grin, and the snapping black eyes of him.

"Well, sir," said he with a kind of snicker which twitched his face, "they tell me that your tow-skirts took their toll of redcoats at Bunker Hill."

"We did what we could, sir."

"Did you lose any men?"

"Ten out of twenty; three dead."

"Half," said he with a snicker. "That's good fighting. Warm work, Lieutenant."

"No; murder. We had no bayonets. . . . Did you see service in Virginia?"

"We are not yet blooded," said he, "so ought to sing a low and modest song. But, with the help of God and Dan'l Morgan, hope for better fortune."

But I mistrusted his modesty, for he wore a baldrick trimmed with wampum and fringed with scalps; and he saw me looking at it. Also, for a gorget, he wore an Indian one of some green, smooth stone shaped like a double bladed axe.

"Oh," said he with a snicker, "these be Wyandotte and taken near Pittsburg; but I count not such woodland scuffles when the talk is of Bunker Hill."

"Sir," said I with a slight shudder, "I knew not how I should conduct in battle until I discovered that I was ashamed to run. But such forest combat as you have seen I am unfamiliar with, and I freely own that the very thought alarms my courage."

He grinned: "Mr. Holden," said he, "you shall encourage me to face red-coats and I shall undertake to teach you to face red-skins—if it is to come to a border war. You will discover a strange kind of pleasure in it."

"Never," said I; "there is horror in it—"

"Ho. And there is, too. But listen, sir; there is a very rage possesses you at sight of these painted devils which burns out all fear, so that you desire only to cleanse the earth of these forest demons. . . . Do you fear a wolf?"

"No, sir—"

"Then you shall not fear this painted pack o' the woods. We Virginians make no more of them than we do of wild beasts—these Wyandottes and their like—"

"They say the Iroquois are far more terrible."

"The better sport," he snickered. "But I hope God will kindly lead us poor riflemen into a real battle against white faces and gay red coats, where honest drums beat the charge and handsome banners wave; and where there is gold lace and bright swords and the brave war-horse that saith ha-ha! amid the trumpets—"

I was laughing and he grinned at me.

So he took me by my arm and made known to me our other Lieutenant, whose name was Stuart, and our ensign, Mr. Warden; and so into our mess tent of sail-cloth, where was spread an excellent supper, and small beer, a bottle of Port, and a gill of rum for every officer.

The very next day His Excellency sent us to the lines, distributing the rifle corps all along our front. Here these back-woodsmen made their first acquaintance with

solid shot and shell, and, during that first day, seemed bewildered and over prudent.

Which amused the infantry who made nothing of the shells and solid shot, and who, out of bravado, and to make us jealous, ran about and pulled the burning fuses from the bombs and chased cannon balls still piping hot. But two of those reckless soldiers were killed at this strange game of ball, and their officers forbade them to do more than gather up such shot and shell as no longer were in motion over the ground.

Before we had manned the lines more than forty-eight hours, deserters from the enemy came in with an account that the very sight of a rifle-shirt had already begun to strike terror into the British.*

I remember one evening, lying along our outposts beyond Ploughed Hill, that a squad of the Stockbridge Indian company was relieved; and that they had slain† four of the enemy picket-guard with their bows and war arrows which they carried in skin quivers on their backs.

This did not seem like honest warfare to me, and I was sorry that they did not fight with their muskets and trade-rifles alone.

My Captain, Hawkes, was of that opinion, also, and said that such instruments were very well on the frontier but spoiled all pleasure in civilized combat.

Well, the week passed in such outpost skirmishing, and cattle and fodder raids along the Mystic and on the various islands—matters of little significance save to match wits with the enemy for trivial stakes—a few sheep, beef cattle, screwed bails of hay—affairs of stealth and whale-boats and a shot or two from the warships. And too much boasting in our newspapers; though we all laughed at the droll verses which crowned Mr. Gage with hay and daisies, and changed his sword to a shepherd's crook:

* They protested that such sharp-shooting and backwoods mode of warfare was "ungenerous."

† These Indians became an added source of terror to the British outposts.

"In days of yore the British troops
Have taken warlike kings in battle;
But now, alas, their valour droops,
For Gage takes naught but rebel cattle.

"Britons, with grief your bosoms strike!
Your faded laurels loudly weep!
Behold your hero, Quixote-like,
Driving a flock of timid *sheep*!"

Late in July, one day, my company had been on the lines and were relieved; and I was lying on my camp bed in my tent, listening to the cannon which had struck up very loud from Boston and ours were flaming and thundering along the Roxbury lines.

Through my tent flap I saw the Post had arrived with letters and packets. But there was nobody to send me any, so I closed my eyes in order not to see.

Therefore, judge of my surprise when presently came to my tent the postman with a letter and a parcel.

On my camp bed I sat up to break the seals; and could scarce make out to read what my Nancy had writ me, so sudden a mist had gathered in my eyes:

"From Lexington, this
17th day of August, 1775

"To Lieutenant Nathan Holden,
of Hawkes Company,
In the Eleventh Rifle Regiment of
the Virginia Line, at Cambridge.

"Dear Nathan:

"On this day the Boston cannon shake the still air in your native village. From the hill toward Concord I can see a most alarming shape of smoke climbing up into the calm, blue sky.

"I have made for you six fine shirts, three night-rails, and a dozen handkerchiefs. Also, I have had knitted for you a tippet which is dyed in butternut, and six pair

of stockings out of soft gray wool as fine as I could buy, and mittens to match, with the forefinger free. And under garments of wool, 1 doz.

"This, because my brother loved you. . . . And my brother's sister wishes you well.

"We are to journey to my uncle's seat at Ashley Court by the Albany route, leaving this tavern at daylight on the morrow.

"My father's wound gives him some trouble, but he is set upon it, and we shall start tomorrow morning in our coach, and with our baggage coach and all horses and servants. Lexington, at last, is to be delivered of us.

"Nathan, I wish you well. I desire for you every good fortune. May God protect you in battle. . . . Am I disloyal to my own flesh and blood if I also say, 'God be kind to your cause'? . . . For, though our family, perhaps, is bred closer to Sovereign and Government than is yours; and though I am fitted to understand such stern and unmoved loyalty as is inherent and a vital part of men like my father; none the less do I honour and glory in so pure a patriot as His Excellency, and, in my heart, am proudly content that your sword, too, has been unsheathed with the unstained and sacred blade of this Virginia gentleman.

"Nathan, only my duty to an old man broken in heart and body holds me inactive in this truly English cause of liberty. For if old England wins, all that is most truly English is lost in such a victory.

"Lately I went to your little home. A stranger was there, hoeing corn in the field by the wall.

"I begged a cup of water at the well. . . . Do you remember?

"I asked if I might pluck a spray of scented rocket. . . . The farm seems thrifty; the buckwheat is in snowy flower and very fragrant, and all a-flutter with painted butterflies. . . . And so, slowly homeward, with my spray of rocket.

"I now take leave of you Nathan. . . . If we are

destined never to meet again, still I would wish you to know that I am your friend. And desire to be forever. Even in great age and bowed with its infirmities. For even then the colours shall not fade from that which is forever pictured in my mind,—that April day beside your well.

"In taking leave of you with every courtesy, I beg to thank you for your patience and civility to me, your never-to-be-forgotten kindness to my brother, your generous forbearance under provocation, your chivalry to the end.

"And I deem it a real honour to believe myself your friend, and to subscribe myself with every compliment and wish and vow in your behalf.

"Your obliged and affectionate and humble servant to command,

"NANCY MONTAGUE."

"P. S. I send within these pages a spray from your garden. And I deem it strange that this flower, which blooms in April, should again in August offer its holy but hopeless message to you and me. For you are a man and you will some day forget. I pray it shall be so. And that, in mercy, I also shall forget that ever I have learned to love a man."

The spray within her letter was forget-me-not.

I got up and went to the tent door, and saw across the street a post-rider buckling sacks across his saddle.

"How soon do you ride?" I called out.

"In half an hour, sir."

"By what route should letters go to Albany?"

"Trust your letter to me, sir, and I'll deliver it to the proper rider."

"I shall be no more than ten minutes."

"Time enough, Lieutenant."

I went into my tent and wrote on my camp table:

"My Nancy,

"With a heart too full for form or ceremony I thank you for your goodness and give thanks to God that I have lived to know so noble and upright a mind and heart as is your own.

"In tenderest thought and prayer I guard your journey; my very soul struggles within my body to leave it and follow you.

"As long as I am alive upon this earth I shall love and honour you above all women. In my mind and heart you, who were the first that ever entered and reigned there, shall reign, unrivalled, till I die. I shall not forget. But, if it be truly a mercy to you, then I pray that you shall forget me.

"My prayers are also for your father's recovery; and that, in time, he find some consolation in a stainless life of honour and devotion to his King. Resignation to God's will alone can not help him to forget his son. Only activity, ceaseless endeavour in the path of duty, ever can dull or mitigate such hunger as his lonely heart must know. Forgive me, but I know something of loneliness, too; for I strive to cheat an empty, aching, hungry heart with a dry dish of duty,—and scarce can swallow it, so desperate is my desire for you.

"You shall not be fearful concerning my safety. Very few are hurt on our lines. And if, on Bunker Hill, Fate did not make of my body a bullet-sack, or a scabbard for a bayonet, then there is little doubt I am born with a charmed life; and so you shall not concern yourself or have any apprehension.

"Nancy, in my heart there remains alive a little bud of that strange flower called Hope. I know not why, but it still lives.

"If there be even a seed of it in you, I do not know. I do not think there is.

"Yet, one thing you shall remember always and all your days;—that I was born to serve you if ever the hour strikes when you have need of me.

"Never forget. Nor ever doubt that, as you are my first love and passion of my youth, so you shall remain until life ends for me—"

I looked up to see the post-rider standing hat in hand. So closed and sealed my letter; and he placed it in his pouch and went out whistling a lively air and snapping the short lash on his whip.

CHAPTER XVIII

Special Service

I HAD been sent with my company, one morning, to do duty on Winter Hill where now was a fine fort—the strongest that had been made within our lines—but scarcely had our men been stationed at our advanced posts below, when, from the hill, I heard our conch-horn sounding the recall.

We withdrew slowly, and at some inconvenience, but employed every precaution to avoid disaster, using what ditches and covered ways lay handy, and though peppered, and a few shells flung at us, escaped to the fortress without loss of life or limb.

Here I discovered my Captain, Mr. Hawkes, who showed me his orders just arrived. And it appeared that the Rifle Corps—or a good portion of it—was to march northward and join Generals Montgomery and Arnold in an attempt on Quebec.

This pleased me, but Captain Hawkes was angry and said that our company was not to march but was ordered into New York Province, excepting only a detail destined to special service.

"Sir," said I, "what is this special service?"

"Why, damme," says he, "I am ordered out with a scout of six and what Indians *you* can engage—but not to rob the Stockbridge company."

"I?"

"That is the order."

"Where the devil am *I* to find Indians?" I demanded.

"Well, here's the order. . . . You see your Mr. Hancock seems to think you can discover trackers among those Loup d'Orange who live in a state of nature."

I stood reading the order, which, to me, seemed an odd one. For it came, through headquarters, from our Continental Congress, and it imposed upon us a mission to the Iroquois and, through them, to all Indians. And this mission was a message from the Continental Congress desiring that the Indians should take no part on either side in this quarrel between King and Colonies.

Yet,—and here appeared the drollest paradox that ever I heard of,—the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, which already had empowered the army to enlist the Stockbridge Indians, now authorized and ordered me to enlist, and attach to my person, such of the wild Loup d'Orange as I deemed necessary to employ as scouts and trackers.

"This seems very strange," said I, looking hard at my Captain.

He said, profanely, that, for his part, he had no stomach for a diplomatic mission to the Iroquois or to any other Indians.

"Hell," quoth he, "I, for one, never desire to gaze on any Indian save over my rifle-sights. And here I am to be given a bag full o' wampum belts and am told to make the Iroquois a civil speech. . . . Beg them to remain polite and quiet! . . . When I care not whether they dig up their damned hatchet—having no dread but only contempt of such cattle—"

He flung an angry order; our conch-horn sounded; and we marched.

"Where the devil is Schoharie?" he demanded of me.

I told him. "Is that where our company is ordered?" I inquired.

"A full battalion. . . . And to that filthy wilderness you and I must return when I have had my fill o' kissing the Iroquois. Damnation, sir! That is not soldiers' work. That is not battle. There will be no banners, no glory, no pomp and panoply of war in that stinking land of forests and painted savages. What

devil's luck sends us thither when we had but begun to enjoy the novelty of cannon?"

He was mad, and I said nothing, for it pleasured me no more than it did him.

All the remainder of that week he was sour and sulky, and ever a-damning of the luck that sent him to persuade Indians with belts and civility rather than with bullets.

A battalion of our regiment marched to join Montgomery. Another, including our company, remained in barracks, under Mr. Stuart and Mr. Warden, and very busy with preparation to march to Stanwix Fort and, from thence, to their new post in the Schoharie Valley.

As for Captain Hawkes and myself, we were ordered to get us horses, and mount six of our riflemen, pick up such Loups as we required, and betake ourselves and our wampum belts to the land of the Iroquois, and there, presently, to persuade them from any alliance and any war at all on either side.

Well, we set out at daybreak one morning and in a foul humour with the world.

We travelled at the pace of marching infantry; baited at taverns, and so, steadily, but without fatigue, rode into the Housatonic country where I believed such Loups as were cultivating their wild, forest gardens might be discovered.

Near Stockbridge we encountered a number of them. All were converts, but either old men, women, and children, or merely hunters, and not inclined to war.

But we learned that there were some of their young men camped on this side of the mountain wall beyond which the Deerfield River flows.

And there, indeed, we found a camp by that little lake where I had seen white men making sugar on my previous trip into these regions.

These Loups were fishing with line and spear and arrow; and, in canoes, with nets; and seemed entirely in a wild state, being clothed in that manner, and showing no trace or influence of civilization.

And, now mark the irony of it all;—for here, naked to the clout, and feathered, and spear in hand, I presently discovered my old schoolmates, Gadfly and the Ghost-snake, each floating close to shore in birch canoes, doubtless of their own making.

When we rode out through the sugar bush and when I called out to them from my saddle, they flung up their spears and greeted me with joyous shouts.

Up the bank they came leaping to take my hands in theirs and caress me and ask eagerly of news, and how the Stockbridge company bore them in the Boston battle. And were proudly content to hear how all praised their people.

I turned and looked at my Captain, who sat his saddle, plainly amazed to see any Indian so merry, so human, so warm hearted, and garrulous, for never before had he had aught to do with Indians, only excepting they were in their paint, their heads shaven, and their bodies oiled and stripped for battle.

And to hear these Loup d'Orange speak so excellent English, to see them laugh, hear their youthful exclamations, their chatter,—and to behold their friendly affection for a white man, seemed to astonish and disconcert him. And I was determined that he should labour under no misconception concerning the quality of these red friends of mine.

"Captain Hawkes," said I, "it is an honour and a pleasure for me to make known to you the two sons of the Prophet of the Loup d'Orange.

"These are the sons of the great Shaman called 'The Masked One who Drums,' and who was baptized and who now, doubtless, is with The Master of Life.

"I now present to your amiable consideration my *friend* and sometime schoolmate, The Ghost-snake."

"How do you do, Ghost-snake," said he, gazing rather wildly upon the Loup.

"How do you do, sir," replied the Indian politely, and

added that he hoped the Captain enjoyed good health and that he was honoured by the acquaintance.

The Gadfly, also, behaved with polite and graceful discretion, and invited us to a seat near a fire where fish were cooking.

We got off our horses and turned them over to our riflemen who soon were off-saddling and making a camp for themselves.

The other Loups, busy with fishing, had paid us no attention, apparently; but now, one by one, they came up to the fire to be made known to us; and behaved with perfect dignity and politeness.

Said my Captain to me aside in my ear: "Well, I'm damned, Nathan, but in Virginia we have no such red people as are these."

"They are our good allies and firm friends," said I, speaking in a natural voice so all might hear, "and I want no better comrade than a Loup d'Orange."

"Ho! brother Nathan," said Gadfly, laughing, "you are well loved in return among my people who still remember what you told us at our council fire."

"Ho!" cried Ghost-snake, bursting with laughter, "—and Mr. Butler's war-belt already in our Sagamore's hands!"

I smiled, too, and related briefly to Captain Hawkes what had passed at that Loup fire.

"By God!" said he, "that was cleverly done—to snatch these Loups from Guy Johnson, and under the very nose of his deputy!"

Amid much merriment and laughter the story of that fire was re-told and volubly discussed while some poked sticks into the kettle of boiling fish and others set maize cakes a-baking in the ashes, and others, still, fell a-toasting strips of venison, squatting there gravely upon their haunches.

Very simply, and unashamed, Ghost-snake offered hospitality. Our plates were squares of bark; our knives

our own; and thus we ate at the fire of these wilder wanderers of the Loup d'Orange.

Their courtesy seemed boundless; they carried to our riflemen a kettle of boiled fish, maize-cakes, and maple-sugar, and shook their heads when our sergeant offered to pay.

As for me, I had as soon offered to pay any white man who had invited me to noon dinner.

But I could, in a manner, requite their kindness, for I had fetched to them a parcel of tobacco, and they were very glad of it and filled their pipes with much merriment and pleasure.

Rum they refused,—though Captain Hawkes offered it,—saying that Dr. Wheelock had taught them that it was not for any red man; and that they had seen the fearful effects of it among other Indians, and never desired to know the taste of it.

And now I thought it proper to enquire politely concerning Witch-Eyes. The brothers seemed embarrassed.

"You know," said Gadfly, shyly, "that my sister now prays to the Mother of your Christ, as do the Black-robes. She says that a woman should pray to a woman, who better understands women. . . . I hope this news does not make you angry, brother."

"No," said I. "Where her heart adores there should she worship."

"Also," admitted Ghost-snake, "my sister heals the sick."

I thought he meant that this daughter of a Shaman had become a Wabeno and played pranks with a witch-drum. And I was about to ask him, when there came a light step behind me and two slender hands over my eyes; and, "Guess!" cried a voice I knew, trembling with laughter.

"Witch-Eyes!" I cried, and up I jumped, and there she was, all in white fawn-skin and moccasins and her happy hands in mine.

Captain Hawkes got up; she gave him one hand in

frank comradeship, then settled herself beside me to chatter and laugh and enquire and wonder and exclaim at all the news I had to tell her, how the world had wagged along since last we met.

Very soon I thought it prudent to mention the reason of our errand here among her people, and asked my Captain to explain our coming; which he did.

When he had ended his discourse there ensued a long and serious silence, which among all Indians is usual, and they deem it only courteous to devote time to grave reflexion before offering opinions upon important matters laid before them.

Yet this was no formal mission, and not a matter for any Sagamore or Sachem to consider—our two peoples already being in alliance, and any young Loup free to do what he chose about it.

Finally Ghost-snake said quietly: "I shall go, brother."

"I also," said Gadfly.

"How many of my people do you require, Nathan?" asked Witch-Eyes, softly.

"Your two brothers are sufficient, little sister."

"Not if there is fighting to be done."

"No. . . . In that event I may send to your Sagamore and ask for others."

She said: "We never have been a numerous people. Our few warriors already are fighting beside your soldiers against the red-coats. Not many Loups remain on the Housatonic. But, in your hour of need, brother, we Loups could send you a small mixed scout—possibly a Narragansett or two, a Siconnet, a Niantic or two, perhaps;—and maybe a warrior from the Pequots or Shannocks."

"Nawaa could lead them," said Gadfly with a mysterious smile at his sister.

"I understood that your war-chiefs were Natanis and Sabatis," said I.

"They are our war-chiefs," replied Ghost-snake

proudly, "but they now command our company in the Boston battle."

"Let the King of England read the war-arrows he pulls out of his soldiers," added Gadfly; "let him read the hatchets sticking in their heads. The panther's marks are on them—tooth and claw."

Their eyes had begun to sparkle, and I noticed how their nostrils flared and fluttered like hounds that raise their heads to nose the wind.

I turned to Witch-Eyes, and saw that her eyes, too, had become brilliant, and her face brightly flushed.

"Who is Nawaa?" I asked.

"Our Shaman."

"A Shaman is not a warrior," said I; "how could a squalling witch-doctor lead a war party of real men?"

"Brother," said she, "we Indians of New England are but many families of our great people—Loups, Narragansetts, Shannocks, Nehantics, Siconnets—and among us, in every band, is a Wabeno warrior of the Panther clan. These will follow Nawaa."

"And who," demanded Captain Hawkes, "is to say to this Nawaa, 'Call up your panthers and sharpen your teeth and claws'?"

Witch-Eyes laughed. Gadfly said: "Our Shaman is no more than a painted witch-drum, that sounds only when Witch-Eyes strikes it."

Captain Hawkes turned to Witch-Eyes: "Can I count on you to send such a war-party into battle?" he asked bluntly.

"Yes, my Black Captain."

Hawkes' swift scowl smoothed presently to a conscious grin, and we others ventured to laugh at the new name with which Witch-Eyes had christened him. It was the gay audacity of the girl that robbed the presumption of any impudence.

"By God," said he, "I accept that name among the Loup d'Orange, on condition that you make me one of you!"

I was astonished at his condescension and complete change of opinion regarding Indians whom he so utterly had hated and despised.

I looked at him and saw that his bold gaze was fixed on Witch-Eyes.

"Ehô! Ehô!" said she, as though a thrush were singing in her throat, "here is a strange young warrior who comes knocking at our lodge door to enter into Ashuelot. What shall we answer, brothers?"

There was an excited silence among the half dozen young men around the fire, which now had become only a mound of whitened ashes.

I said in a low voice to Captain Hawkes: "That was wisely done, sir."

"Wise or otherwise," said he, "it is done. Yonder young girl is no browner than am I, and uses our tongue more daintily."

Witch-Eyes looked seriously at Hawkes, then glanced from one intent and eager face to another.

"What is your answer to this young man?" she enquired in a sober voice.

"Our answer is yours," they said impatiently and all together.

Then the girl bent forward and, with her breath, blew the snowy ashes from the fire, revealing a dull red gleam.

Ghost-snake laid a shredded strip of cherry-birch across it. His brother blew it to a little yellow flame. Then, in turn, the others covered this with dry ozier, witch-hazel, and witch-hopple, till it blazed, and the aromatic smoke scented the air.

Then Witch-Eyes said to Captain Hawkes: "God, whom we call The Master of Life, has told his children that they are brothers, and so should dwell in peace with one another. But to secure peace and good will on earth, sometimes war is necessary. Therefore, we Loups d'Orange, who are resolved on peace, have dug up the hatchet at Ashuelot to secure it.

"We are not a numerous people. The great days of

our power and glory are past. We thought we were too few and too feeble to offer either counsel or battle to anybody.

"But there came to us from Colonel Johnson a red war-belt; and his belt-bearer told us we must take it or perish in the wrath of the Six Nations.

"We took it. We knew not what to do with this red belt. What had happened seemed like the memory of a bad dream.

"And while we sat confused, still half asleep, and vaguely afraid, there came, suddenly, to our fire a young man who took us by the arm and shook us awake!"

Witch-Eyes rose; Captain Hawkes got up and so did I; and she gave each of us, in turn, her hand.

She said very gravely:

"Many years ago the Iroquois defeated us in a great battle. We were made a subject people, and degraded.

"In our grief and servitude there came white missionaries among us who converted us. It was then that we first heard of Jesus Christ.

"Since then we Loups have often told one another that had Christ remembered the Loup d'Orange in his need, and called to us for help, we would have dug up the hatchet at Ashuelot and hastened to his aid."

She turned to me and laid her hands on my shoulders:

"Nathan," she said, "when you came to our fire and shook us awake, we began to remember our ancient liberty. And instantly our *minds* were enlisted in your cause.

"But, more than that, we Loups began to remember how we had boasted to one another that, had Christ called to us, our war-cry would have answered him.

"So, when you awoke us, we said to each other: 'Christ did not remember to call upon us for help; but now those who sent us his missionaries are calling us to battle.' And instantly our *hearts* were enlisted."

She took her hands from my shoulders and looked at Captain Hawkes:

"Brothers," she said, "are of one mind and one heart. And if also they be of one blood, then they never can be divided in life or in death."

Now, very gravely, she drew from her beaded pouch a little birchen box and opened it.

In it was white paint and red and a small, smooth stick.

Then she bade us unlace our rifle-frocks at the throat; and, on Captain Hawkes' chest, and on mine, she made a small white cross and the shape of a panther's head in red.

That accomplished, she turned to her people and said in a low voice:

"I acquaint you that our brother, Black Captain, is a real Loup and of our race, and that this fire is his fire. Now give to this Loup what is rightly his!"

And, concerning me, she repeated the same speech.

Then Ghost-snake gave us each an arrow, a bow, a fish-spear; Gadfly spread a blanket; Witch-Eyes bade us lay these weapons upon it. One of the young hunters went into the woods and fetched out two ropes of club-moss. Witch-Eyes drew them through our belts so that they trailed behind like panthers' tails.

At that a gay and joyous murmur of approbation arose around us.

"Ehô!" cried Witch-Eyes in a clear voice, "here are real white Loups!"

Everywhere grave or impassive faces altered and changed to laughing and merry ones, and these people came crowding around us to grasp our hands.

All was now excitement, jollity, and good fellowship, and nothing of former curiosity or restraint. We were one of them and they had no longer any interest in us as strangers nor any fear of our ridicule or contempt for their condition or customs or mode of life.

A young man ran down to a canoe and brought back three fine lake-salmon. There was no doubt that a feast was to celebrate the day's events. A dance, too. For a

woman came from her bark lodge carrying a Shaman's dress of scarlet feathers and weasel pelts, and two drums; and a youth, leaning against a tree, drew a kind of shepherd's pipe, or flute, from his girdle, and fell to practising, and plainly vain of his skill to produce those notes like the complaint of some solitary and dismal bird.

That my "Black Captain" was mightily taken with Witch-Eyes was evident. He followed her about and appeared to find her gaiety and mischief enchanting—she seemed somewhat saucy to me, and I noticed was neither inclined to stroll nor to take to a canoe with him as he so plainly seemed to urge.

Continually escaping him to busy herself among the women at their cooking, or making pretence to pound corn and maple sugar, nevertheless she sometimes looked at him askance and laughed for all the world like any pretty school-room hoyden conscious of her first swain.

When we went down to the lake to clean our hands and faces, I ventured to suggest caution, saying that this Indian girl was well aware of white folks' customs, and was not to be considered lightly.

"Is there any harm in a frolic?" said he, scrubbing his face with both hands, like a raccoon.

"None," said I, "so it remains no more than a frolic. But she is a pretty thing, Mr. Hawkes, and her education adds a dangerous and a subtle charm to the freedom and wildness of her conduct and condition."

He continued to scrub himself in silence. I had nothing more to say. He sat down on a log, presently, and fished out a comb and glass and fell to combing his hair with great attention.

Dusk came and the fires burned crimson. All the Indians had dressed them in their finery. Feathers and white fawn-skin garments made brilliant with bead-work, and marvellous moccasins that glittered like the throats of humming-birds—these were their gala dresses; but the men wore no paint save only a scarlet bar across the brow, and the women none at all.

There was another fire for the women and children who ate by themselves, and we could hear them chattering and exclaiming, and their uncontrolled laughter ringing out through the noisy merriment.

As for us, our talk was eager and excited, but it was of war. To these Loups it was an amazing and triumphant adventure to find themselves again on the Iroquois trail after all these bitter years of subjugation.

That our mission was to be one of peace—in the beginning, anyway—made no difference to them. They were thrilled at the prospect of being part of an embassy that should speak with authority to their conquerors and bid them hold their hands from this bloody quarrel between white men.

Year after year, as long as they could remember, a single Mohawk warrior had visited them every twelve month in order to remind them of their subjugation.

Now, allied to us, they in their turn were to face their tyrants and listen to the warning and advice we offered them for their own good and safety.

So, while we ate, there was much animated conversation around our fire, and many appeals to their Black Captain,—all the young men begging to be enlisted where only two seemed necessary.

Our sergeant came down to our fire and asked permission for himself and his men to become spectators—which was accorded.

Behind us, now, the women and children gathered and sat down, still chattering. All were conscious of the rising gaiety and excitement. Ghost-snake called out to me:

"You have taught us that boasting is idle, but we Loups forget that when we dance!"

We heard a loud murmur behind us and chiidren crying out in delight or fear; and, turning to look, we saw Witch-Eyes all fluttering in scarlet feathers. She had a drum; and, behind her, came the boy with the shepherd's flute, and another youth with a drum.

"Wabena! Wabena!" cried everybody, jumping about and clapping hands.

Witch-Eyes looked at us and laughed and tossed the dark cloud of her hair. Then she seated herself, touched her drum with delicate fingers. A low, hollow rhythm filled the air; from the other drum a thumping cadence began; the flute squalled and squealed and wailed.

Witch-Eyes chanted in a clear and golden voice the Loup chant called "Ashuelot," which, afterward, she translated one day for me, and which I put into verse:

"In Ashuelot the fields are green,
A silver river flows between,
Where orchards bloom and skies are fair—
Ehû! Ehû! Ak-á-û!
A hatchet lies deep buried there!
Gate-keepers of the East, beware!

"Where in the North we tracked our foes,
They trapped us where the Mohawk flows;
Let the sly Tortoise, Wolf, and Bear
Ehû! Ehû! Ak-á-û!
Beware the Panther in their snare!
Gate-keepers of the West, beware!

"Master of Heaven, dry our tears.
Master of Heaven, calm our fears,
Prophet, arise and strike thy drum!
(Ehû! The Shaman's drum!)
The Long Night dies, the dawn is come!
The Panther wakens in his lair—
Guards of the Long Dark House, beware!"

All were chanting it now, with all their might. Captain Hawkes and I, also, were howling with the rest. Suddenly Ghost-snake sprang into the firelit circle.

The dance had begun.

CHAPTER XIX

At Peggy Wymple's

AT daylight we crossed the mountain wall by the old Huron trail.

We all were mounted—my Indians, unfatigued by frolic—having run all the way to Ashuelot; and, starting back a little before midnight, came trotting their horses into our camp as the day broke.

For your Loup d'Orange long ago learned the use of horses—which the Iroquois really never did, as far as I know. Loups naturally ride well; and when I was at school I often saw them a-horse in Stockbridge—I mean the Indian village—where, in my childhood, were near three hundred Indian families,—mostly converts under their minister, Mr. Sargent.

He it was—and his father—who converted and civilized these people, and spoke their language, and made a grammar of it. And he told my Uncle that our Loups, in mode of life and talents and inclinations, more closely resembled the Dakotas and some horse-riding nations than they did the Iroquois or gens-du-bois.

Well, as I say, we were over the mountains and riding north by sun up, nine of us in all, and Ghost-snake and Gadfly truly superb in their wild dress and plumage, and finely mounted, too.

They wore the beautiful white fawn-skin shirt and leggins of ceremony. Their hair, uncut for war, was heavily clubbed; and from their heads sagged masses of white and scarlet feathers.

Each carried a white and scarlet blanket, athwart which their rifles lay. Bow and quiver slanted across their backs; hatchet, knife, powder-horn and pouch straps crossed their breasts. From their heels dangled

summer-weasel pelts, and these, with tassels of wampum, drooped from their horses' bridles.

As for paint, they wore, now, white crosses on either cheek, and, on chin and across the eyes and bridge of the nose, stripes of scarlet paint which made them appear as though masked.

We were gay as we rode, what with snatches of song and laughter and a-chatting of the night's frolic where a Loup youth did do a wild-turkey dance to admiration —even from the chick that breaks peeping from the shell to the droll courtship of the great goblin cock in all the pride of wattles and plumage of bronze and purple.

So, all that long and sunny day, we rode into the North; and at night rolled us in our blankets by a stream that dashed the night air with clouds of spray, singing us all to sleep under the high stars.

The next day was the same until, late in the afternoon, we came out through that narrow valley along which ran the old trail from Bennington, and saw the Hudson shining before us, and the old Dutch city on its three hills.

Everywhere, now, were farms, and folk busy with early harvest. Where we crossed the ferry the ferrymen told us that never had there promised such a harvest since the oldest could recollect, and that there was great fear of war in these parts; and dread lest the Boston quarrel inflame all the Northland, and Sir John Johnson and Colonel Guy turn on the Valley with fire, sword and hatchet.

We rode through the town and straight up hill to the fort, and saw only a few troops—some light horse and rangers and a battalion of militia, but of what regiments I know not.

At the fort they knew nothing of Guy Johnson, only that his movements were suspicious and full of mystery, and that always he was moving westward and talking with belts in strange places and at secret fires. Also it was known that the Mohawks at the Upper and Lower

Castles had become restless and sullen and arrogant, and cared little what coloured belt our people sent them, or, indeed, if we sent any at all.

From all we could gather, the situation in Tryon County was this: Sir John had fortified Johnson Hall and lay there in sulky defiance with an army of Scotch Highlanders and armed Tories; old Colonel John Butler and his son, Walter, had left Butlersbury and were out mischief-making with Guy Johnson along the Mohawk River. Never, moreover, within the memory of man, had the Long House seemed so sullen, restless, and menacing, what with the Eastern Gate Keepers openly boasting, and some even in their paint; and the Onondagas sneering at the efforts of General Schuyler to content them; and the Seneca Snakes swarming like wolves at Guy Johnson's heels, and impatient to tear the valley to bloody fragments.

We arrived at the ferry below Schenectady in the starlight; and neither I nor Captain Hawkes liked the looks of that town, where we thought the defences contemptible for a frontier post. What had been The Queen's Fort had been patched up, and the rotting stockade replaced, and a few other batteries, curtains, redoubts, and lunettes begun. But, Lord!—to see so exposed a town, and to notice how little these people appeared to understand their peril, did somewhat sicken me; and I could see nothing to bar an outrush of royalists and Indians from the North, which, in my opinion, even Albany could not withstand.

We lay, that night, at the ancient tavern of Peggy Wymple, near to a place called Caughnawaga where—as everywhere—was the same mixed population—part King's people, part friends to liberty. Like a bin full of loose powder with a burning candle stuck into the heap—so seemed this region to me. Not a soul but appeared to be busy about the day's work, as usual, and men, women, and children at early harvest along these fertile river-flats, ringed and walled in by the dark ram-

parts of a forest that stretched unbroken to the Canadas!

Never had I gazed upon or conceived such a menace as these vast, black forests, in whose twilight depths roved the most ferocious warriors of any people on earth —the Iroquois of the Six Nations!

Somewhere within those dim and fearsome shades, Guy Johnson was now journeying from Nation to Nation, holding councils at *secret fires of which, perhaps, there would remain no record, no memory, not one string of wampum for the Onondaga archives to make a history of Guy Johnson's stealthy purpose.

My Captain was amazed and disgusted at the carelessness and indifference of these dwellers in the Mohawk Valley, and to see how everywhere farm life continued as in time of security, and no defences,—not a fort, not a block house to be seen, nor picket, palisade, nor covered way.

Our hostess was a pretty thing—a mere girl in years but already a widow—and celebrated in the Valley for the gay heart of her, and her beauty. All, it appeared, in these regions, knew the ancient Inn of Peggy Wymple, though we never had heard of her.

Sure she was a sprightly lass, our pretty, widowed hostess, and fresh and piquant as she curtsied us in and sent a servant maid to show us to our chambers.

My Captain, whom I had reason to believe susceptible to female charms, seemed oddly indifferent to the winsome Peggy; and when I ventured to extol her, said: "Yes, she is well enough. . . . But seems no more than the shadow of a flame compared to that Indian lass of Ashuelot."

So we cleaned us of our journey, making a mighty splashing; and presently sat down to a dish of fowl and soupaan, and a fine bottle of French wine in the taproom.

Mistress Peggy came in to see us served—truly all

* Indeed, no records seem to be extant of some of these councils, only that they had been held.

wimples and dimples and a fresh and rosy sight for dusty eyes.

"La," said she, when I ventured to mention the peril of the times, "Guy Johnson never would let loose his savages on his old neighbours. Why, gentlemen," she added, laughingly, "I know not which party you so gallantly represent in your beautiful rifle-frocks, but I am bold to maintain that the landed gentry of Tryon County are too chivalrous ever to draw sword against the peaceful inhabitants of their own native land."

"Or ever let loose a thousand Iroquois hatchets on this valley full o' women and little children," said Captain Hawkes, gravely carving our smoking fowl.

"Goodness me, gentlemen! From where do you come who harbour ideas so monstrous concerning our Tryon gentry?" she cried. "There lives no kinder man than Sir John Johnson; no finer character than Colonel Guy; no magistrate and officer more upright than Colonel John Butler; no young man more truly graceful, elegant, and accomplished than his son, Lieutenant Walter—"

She checked herself; her pretty hand flew to her lips and pressed them with her laced hanker; and we both looked around to see what pretty Peggy gazed at out of her big, hazel eyes.

A gentleman had entered the tap-room and was casting aside a black riding-cloak clasped with a silver chain, and laying upon it a gilt-edged military hat, very smartly cocked with black and green.

Now he came into the candle light and, with astonishing grace, bowed low to pretty Peggy, and lifted her dimpled hand to his lips.

"The old gods, madam, had their Hebe; we of the Valley are more fortunate in our lovely Peggy Wymple."

"Sir," she laughed, "they had their Orpheus, also, those same and ancient gods; but we in the Valley have our Mr. Butler."

"But, madam, Orpheus charmed all things, so what more is left for me?"

"Mr. Butler," said she saucily, "they say you sometimes conduct so harmoniously that you raise the dead!"

"Madam, you are witty but severe." A slight smile touched his lips, but his restless, absent gaze had shifted toward us, noticing our rifle dress and then our features.

Here was a pickle; perhaps a quarrel; for now I saw his features darken suddenly with recollection, and his dark eyes change—I swear it!—change to the amber yellow of a bird of prey, under my very gaze.

But already I had made up my mind; and up I got and made him as fine a bow as I knew how; and, hand on hilt, he rendered me my salute with even greater courtesy and a far more supple grace.

"Mr. Butler," said I, "to renew so slight yet so charming an acquaintance as has been ours is singularly agreeable to me."

"Mr. Holden," said he, "your condescension and politeness flatter me." But his two yellow eyes of a hunting hawk were holding with mine another language.

I smiled upon him and begged permission to name him to my Captain.

Their salute was grave and courteous.

Already a servant maid had laid plate for him; he bowed to us again; we three seated ourselves; and I called for another wine glass. When it was fetched:

"Mr. Butler," said I, "will you do us the honour of a glass of wine?"

He said, in his still, unhuman voice, that he was vastly obliged to us; and we offered him health and compliments.

He was, I felt sure, considering what countenance to make me regarding that Loup council fire.

Concerning the failure of his mission, he must have knowledge by this time, because the Stockbridge Indians were fighting before Boston. And I could see by the fixed evil in his gaze that he had doubts regarding my share in the business.

But I was determined not to let this man force me to

a quarrel; for, in this crisis of my country's peril where every man was needed, it seemed to me contemptible to imperil life in petty personal animosities.

So I took the bull by the horns—or, rather, the hawk by his pinions, and held him high, so to speak, to avoid beak and talon.

"Mr. Butler," said I, "it is a happiness to know that your singularly beautiful and fertile country is safe from those unhappy devastations of war which now ravage my native Province."

"Sir," said he, "where there is no disloyalty there will be no war."

I made Captain Hawkes a sign not to spew up that dose but rather make pretence to smack his lips.

"Loyalty," said I, "is the key to all character. Sir, let us drink to so respectable a sentiment. I give you loyalty!—loyalty to a just God, a just King, and a just cause!"

We drank, politely. But that toast had so surprised and taken the wind of him that he scarce found his voice at all.

"Sir," he said at last, "it is very evident to me that I have mistaken you. I had not expected to discover in you a friend to government—"

"Government! Why, Mr. Butler, *good* government has no more ardent friends than Captain Hawkes and myself. We honour it! We applaud it. We subscribe most heartily and humbly to the best of Kings and the best of government!—" and, "My God!" thought I, "there has been neither o' these in North America since Lexington."

"Pretty hostess," said my Captain, his napkin at his mouth to mask the grin—"if there be a twin to this bottle in your cellar, pray infinitely oblige us with an introduction."

At that Mr. Butler protested that the honour should be his, but we carried it with a prodigious civility stuck full o' compliments as a pudding is of plums.

And, in that hour, one thing I learned of Mr. Butler, —that there was no real witty humour in him, and no slightest understanding of either jest or irony. And the reason was because of a pride so monstrous that it filled him to the nostrils and stifled all subtler sense of the ridiculous.

Else how had he swallowed so clumsy a sarcasm as that concerning government and sovereign?

Well, we were to learn something further of this pale, graceful, and polite young man whose eyes now seemed dark and melancholy and no longer yellow as a bird o' prey's.

For, with the new bottle full of old wine, and after we had drunk confusion to all villains—I not regarding myself as of that guild—the tongue of Mr. Butler became most elegantly loosened, and he spoke mysteriously and of lords and ladies and of great events impending—in which, it was inferred, *he* was to play no contemptible a rôle.

I looked at my Captain, and he called for another bottle. God, how I prayed for a level head—having no opportunity to escape any toasts which now flew from Mr. Butler's lips in passionate and romantic terms—toasts which, even in fopdom, must have seemed extravagant.

And he would have us drink our sweethearts—confiding to us that to-day's love became yesterday's none too soon to suit a gentleman occupied with vaster ambitions than were Don Juan's.

"Mr. Holden," said he thickly, "these are flaming times which only a prophet born can understand and cope with. Sweethearts? Certes! But *en passant*—take what blossom offers beside your path, inhale its fragrance as you pass,—" He made a graceful gesture as though dusting his sleeve—"a new day and another flower! Voyez vous, messieurs! C'est comme ça que j'aime la femme—en passant!—"

Hawkes refilled our glasses; into Mr. Butler's pale brown cheeks came a delicate play of flame:

"I give you Love en passant! Fill, gentlemen!"

We drank to love.

"By God," said he, "no woman ever meant more to me than a kiss and a sigh over night!"

He laughed rather wildly and fell to recounting his amours and adventures, and how he had a woodland lodge near Johnstown where he and Sir John and other young men held wild revelry with loose women. And his description of the debauchery did sicken me.

He stared at us in his handsome, crazy way, and I saw no stigmata of evil in his face, only that detached, enraptured glare of a mad visionary who conjures vast phantoms in his unhinged brain:

"Gentlemen," he said, more thickly, "I perceive you to be men of sense and discernment and of reflexion. Do you then comprehend into what hell's chaos that first cannon shot at Boston hath shaken this continent?"

"Government," said I, "lies in ruins."

"Ha!" cried he, "you have said it, sir! Government lies mangled amid its Boston ruins where a parcel of incompetents and cowards scuttle about the débris, skulking in terror of the rebel cannon!"

Captain Hawkes said we should drink to a *new* and glorious government founded upon the ruins of the old.

We drank; and Mr. Butler's dark eyes blazed.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you seem men of heart, men of courage, of vision!—Bear with me if my indignation betray my tongue to indiscretion—"

"No! No!" bawled Hawkes. "We are committed and are of one mind that the only remedy for this unhappy continent is new men, new leaders, new policy, and new government!"

Mr. Butler, pale, terribly intent, rose, leaning with both hands upon the table, and bent his dark, mad gaze upon us.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you have voiced what hath raged in my mind and heart these many days.

"My gracious sovereign—my King—is betrayed by

these poltroons and fools he sends to scour out treachery and rebellion in America. What are they—these governors, these magistrates, these Gages, Burgoynes, Percys?—this brainless, cowardly crew that huddle yonder in Boston, trapped and all a-tremble before a filthy mob of slaves and peasants?"

"Down with all slaves!" cried Hawkes, "and all shall drink it!"

We drank that toast.

Mr. Butler had lost all trace of colour. Deadly pale, haughtily erect, his handsome face had become an arrogant marble mask in which there seemed a dreadful kind of beauty.

He said: "There is a fine and sensitive perception inborn in those of noble blood and origin, which enables such personages to *foresee,* where the common herd have no vision, no comprehension.

"I tell you, gentlemen, that in this hour America is already severed from England, and adrift!

"I tell you that what alone can save America to the British crown is a leader!—a leader fitted by birth, by noble inheritance, by great traditions, to stand as viceregent, vested with authority, and take this rebel country by the throat and crush her to her knees!

"*I* know how it should be done!"

"If you know that," cried I, "you shall tell us, Mr. Butler!"

He enveloped me in his mad glare:

"Why should I not tell you?" he said in a deadened and level voice. "Why should an Ormand-Butler hesitate to speak his mind?"

"Ormand!" repeated Hawkes, nudging me.

"I am of that race, sir!" said Mr. Butler haughtily. "I am kinsman to the Great Duke! In my veins flows the blood of Ossary and of Arran. We are cup-bearers to Kings of England! Why should Butler of Butlersbury hold his tongue amid the shouting of these fools who are pulling down the temple of authority around our ears?"

"A leader!" shouted Hawkes, who now, for his part, was considerably heated, but seemed to keep his clarity of mind.

We drank to a "leader," and I thought a prayer for His Excellency, and knew that my Captain was thinking the same.

But, in his monstrous infatuation and pride, Mr. Butler had instantly accepted the toast as meant for himself.

He set his wine glass upon the table, and, still standing, bowed low and with a graceful yet careless carriage, as though our tribute were natural but a trifle tardy. And so great an inclination to laugh assailed me to see such amazing vanity in any man, that I masked my choking with my napkin, and so strangled laughter in my throat.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I do not choose to disguise from you—or from any living man in North America—that if my sovereign deigns to offer me the leadership I promise him beforehand that I shall render him such an account as no steward ever rendered yet!

"I shall promise him not only to save these colonies to the Crown, but shall scour them clean with fire,—burn out the dross!—and weld them into a vast Western Empire!"

"Magnificent!" bawled Hawkes. "And who but an Ormand-Butler should reign over such an Empire!"

Instantly we saw in that madman's eyes that *this* was his monstrous obsession—power!—to magnify himself—ravage, burn, murder, strangle his own Motherland so that he might *reign!*

My head was humming as I stared at this pro-consul, this ruthless lunatic—this sprig of gentry unhinged by the monstrous, morbid visions of a disordered brain.

In him—in those dark, mad eyes, I saw, suddenly, nothing to scoff at, God knows—but a danger—a sinister and horrid menace to all that was sane and wholesome and respectable in this land of mine.

Hawkes, too, had become silent and of sombre mien, and leaned in his chair gazing upon this man with a demon's mind. And I think my Captain's thoughts were mine, for here, before us, was concentrated a vast power for evil—the *will* to do it, the dreadful energy, the pride, the ruthlessness,—and more alarming than these—the *means* to attempt this crime were within the grasp of those well-cared-for and delicate hands of his!—the Iroquois!

My head hummed, but the sudden revelation of this living danger steadied my self-control.

"Mr. Butler," said I, "pray be seated, and let us further develop this mighty enterprise; for I confess, sir, that I do not understand how this leadership is to be invested in yourself."

He slowly resumed his seat, and spoke with terrible conviction and a strange and haughty bitterness:

"They in Boston—nay, in London—make little of us in Tryon County. I have written to my Lord George, who has not done me the honour to notice my communication.

"There remains but one way to recommend myself to my sovereign's notice," he cried fiercely; "and I shall do that with my Iroquois and with the loyalists of County Tryon, and in such a manner that all the world shall know who Walter Butler is!"

"Sir," said I, "can you depend upon Sir John and Colonel Guy Johnson?"

"In time. They think me too rash. I shall mend that with such a victory that none will talk to me of youth and rashness.

"What advantage lies in talk!" he cried violently. "Where does it advance Guy Johnson to slink along the Mohawk and talk and talk and talk to the Iroquois with belts, when in one moment I could set them aflame! Why wait? Why argue? War is *here!* How avert what already has begun! One red belt is all I need."

He emptied his glass, set it down so carelessly that it broke; and he flung it aside.

"Guy Johnson has sent belts to the Long House and has kindled another fire on the Schoharie. Time wasted!"

"On the Schoharie?" I repeated.

"Yes, on Fox Creek. That's where there's to be more tongue-wagging."

"When?"

"Now. This very week—and the rebel cannon playing on Boston, and the precious moments flying. What cursed folly! What strange paralysis. God in Heaven!" he cried, clenching his delicate hands, "what blabbing devil has entered into Guy Johnson that keeps him gabbling with our Iroquois when one war-cry would set them wild for battle!

"My father and Sir John are mad to hold me back. Guy is a fool to restrain the Mohawks when Brant already hath showed him where the buried hatchet lies—when Hiakatoo is already in his paint, and the Keepers of the Western Gate are calling out through the Long House to the Mohawks that they shall open the Eastern Gates and let them through."

I touched my Captain with my elbow. We had no time to lose, and he also seemed to realize that.

Long since our pretty hostess had gone to bed. In the tap-room, waiter and tapster were sound asleep upon the settle.

I rose with a mighty yawn.

"Mr. Butler," said I, "my head hums with a vast riot of disordered and amazing thoughts which your eloquence and wisdom have evoked and set in motion.

"Men like myself, of little imagination and no experience, must remain awed and bewildered before the amazing machination of so fertile and dominant a mind as is your own.

"Therefore, sir, I need to sleep on't if I am to comprehend to real advantage all that you have revealed to

us this night. . . . Do you bait here, Mr. Butler?"

"No, sir; I sleep at the Hall where, God helping, I shall again endeavour to arouse Sir John from that strange and sluggish despair into which he hath lately sunk. . . . Will you and Captain Hawkes ride with me thither? You shall be welcome. Come! Shall we make a night of it? I know a pretty Indian girl—"

"We are beholden to your courtesy, Mr. Butler, but are detained on other business," said I politely.

At that he looked hard at us both:

"Gentlemen," said he, "I would not seem impertinent—"

"Oh," said I, laughing, "our mission here is no secret from you, sir. Briefly and plainly, we are in Tryon to do whatever mischief we can do and make what converts we can make to the best of Governments."

A pale smile touched his lips, but his strange eyes remained mirthless.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we shall meet again. I do not doubt it, because I have revealed my mind to you and you approve.

"You shall hear of me, gentlemen, be assured of that. They shall not stifle my voice or keep me down. There is, in my veins, a tide that none can stay. There is in my mind and heart a purpose that none can check. I see my destiny."

"I see it, too," said I.

He smiled his deathly smile, bowed very low to us, took from a chair his cloak and hat, flung a guinea upon the table, and, bending as a monarch bends, not asking but assuming precedence, passed gracefully before us.

The door closed noiselessly behind him. Listening in silence we heard the gallop of his horse along the road to Johnstown.

CHAPTER XX

Fox Creek

WE forded the Mohawk at Keator's Rift—a ticklish business by starlight, where shallows seemed like deep black pools, and depths, on the other hand, were deceptive. But our horses were sure guides at this immemorial ford, and over it we went in single file, Captain Hawkes leading, then our five mounted riflemen, then my two Indians, while I rode last.

I heard Ghost-snake say to Gadfly that here was the scene of the great Algonquin defeat, and that Schoharie rightly was Mohican soil.

It was a dim, strange region of misty starlight into which we rode, set with spectral forests through which rushed the brawling creek under a smoke of chilly mist.

The Mohawk flows from west to east; the Schoharie rises south and comes north to meet it. From the southwest, the Cobuskill, and from the southeast, Fox Creek flow into the Schoharie, swelling it to a respectable river where it nears the Mohawk, but not a navigable one for batteaux, nor even for canoes without many a long carry.

When we came opposite to Fox Creek we could see white foam where it poured into the Schoharie. We did not cross, but took the saddles from our horses and, without a fire, rolled us in our blankets to get what sleep we might against the coming of the dawn.

Just before daybreak my Indians awoke us. We fed our horses and ate bread and cheese and meat which my men had fetched from Mistress Wymple's ancient inn near Caughnawaga. Then, in file, we led our horses down among the bowlders and into the icy, smoking water, following the riffles across with little difficulty;

and came out on the north bank of Fox Creek just as the sky reddened with the hidden sun.

Almost immediately my Indians discovered a heavy trail along the bank where was plainly every evidence that many moccasins had passed there. These signs thickened and spread where in every direction a multitude of little narrow trails betrayed the gathering and wandering of many men.

I noticed the fixed, tense visages of my Indians, who now were almost in the very presence of their hereditary enemies. Whether or not they entertained any misgivings concerning their appearance on this embassy, I could not discover. Certainly they showed no hesitation nor any evidence of fear.

It was Gadfly who first smelled smoke. His brother presently discovered it, even amid the rising mists from the water.

Captain Hawkes reined in his horse.

"Yours is a ready tongue," he said to me, "and you seem naturally to understand Indians, which I do not. Will you say to these Iroquois what should be said?"

"If you wish, sir."

"Which of these Loups will interpret?"

"The Ghost-snake."

"And, if need be, you can communicate to him in the Loup tongue?"

"At a pinch I could make myself understood."

"Then," said he, "let us get forward in God's name, for I shall be contented when we deliver these damned belts and are well out of this lair of Mr. Butler and his Iroquois."

I nodded, listened for a moment.

All of us, now, could hear voices from the woods ahead, and the smell of a camp came rank on the morning air.

I asked for the wampum belts, and Captain Hawkes fished them from his saddle bag.

There were two belts—one white and purple, and of six rows; the other of ten rows, black with a white design. There also was a string.

These I took into my left hand and spurred forward on the narrow trail.

Long before we sighted the camp ahead we were heard and seen and reconnoitred and followed; and were aware, presently, of unseen men running along through the woods and keeping pace with our horses.

Ahead there was an open grove of oaks and maples; and at the farther end of this sunny and level stretch amid huge ramparts of forbidding pines, I saw a fire, and smoke rising, and a great moving mass of colour where were many people gathering. It was their blankets and their feathers and paint that made so brilliant a spectacle, gay as drifting autumn leaves in the green of the woods.

Straight toward it I rode, followed by our little cavalcade in single file, and when I came near their fire I dismounted and gave my bridle to a rifleman.

All got off their horses. I called the Ghost-snake to me, whispered to Captain Hawkes to bring his men no nearer the half circle of savages which had already formed to confront us.

To Ghost-snake I spoke under my breath: "What nation is that yonder?"

"Brother," he said calmly, "I see Mohawks, Cayugas, Senecas, and some Onondagas. There are Praying Indians, too, and I think, Wyandottes."

"Nevertheless," said I, "I shall speak only to The Long House. Follow me."

I walked directly toward the fire and threw up my right hand, palm outward.

"Peace!" I said, "—I bring peace from the Continental Congress which is the great Federal council of our thirteen colonies. I bring peace, friendship, good will to our brothers of The Long House."

Slowly, from the blanketed throng in front of me,

a tall Sachem moved out and stood near the fire. More slowly still he raised his arm, palm outward.

"Peace, bearer of belts," he said gravely.

There was a silence; then, lowering his arm:

"Now, you ambassador from the Thirteen Fires, our ears are open."

I took the black and white belt in my right hand:

"Sachems, wise men, war chiefs of the Six Nations, and every warrior and every hunter and every woman and every child among you whose roof is the roof of The Long House, listen attentively to what the Continental Congress has to say to its brothers of the Iroquois Confederacy, and what the Thirteen Fires desire to make known to the six fires of The Long House.

"Because we desired to speak to our brothers in friendship we have made an embassy, and have despatched it to you with belts. This embassy is properly authorized. Two officer chiefs attend it with two interpreters. Five of our best young warriors escort us, as is fit and proper."

I took another step, nearer, and spoke in a voice as cool and distinct as I was able:

"Brothers:

"Our Congress desires that you shall listen with friendly ears and hearts to what we now have to say to you.

"Brothers:

"This is a family quarrel between us and Old England. You Indians are not concerned in it. We do not ask you to take up the hatchet against the King's troops. We desire you to remain at home, and not join on either side, but keep the hatchet buried deep! That is one thing we have to say to you; and we give you this belt so that you shall know that we mean what we have said!"

I gave the belt to the Canienga Sachem, who took it in stolid silence. Then I continued:

"Brothers:

"Let us both be cautious in our behaviour toward each other. Let us fortify our minds with the memory of our ancient friendship and close our ears against those evil singing birds which are found everywhere nesting among the lodges of honest people.

"Let us be wary of what rumours we hear unless spoken by good and honest men.

"If anything disagreeable ever arises between us of the Thirteen Fires and you of the Six Fires, let us instantly despatch ambassadors with belts to heal the wound. We promise to do so—by this belt!" (The belt of six rows.)

"Brothers:

"We do not ask you for any answer at this hour or in this place.

"Our brother, Corlear, has kindled for us and for you a small fire at Albany, and our Congress invites you to attend that fire in one week from this day.

"Brothers:

"This is all we have to say to you. We have said it with open hearts and kind.

"We now give you this string of wampum so that you shall know our words are not vain, nor lightly spoken, and that we desire that they shall remain forever in your archives at Onondaga, there to be lodged with your Keeper of the Wampum, and so to be read and remembered by your children and your children's children for all the years to come." (The string.)

That was all. I waited until the sonorous voice of the Ghost-snake had finished his interpretation. Then, amid utter silence, I turned and walked back to my horse.

"Riflemen!" said Captain Hawkes in a ringing voice, "make ready for the command! Sling pieces! Stand to horse! Mount! Forward, file, trot!" And away we went.

It was only when we were fording the riffles below Fox Creek that he said to me: "Well, I'm damned glad

we're out o' that hornet-nest, Nathan. Did you mark their black looks? And when they saw we had two Loups with us—Lord, to see their faces!"

Behind me I heard Gadfly laugh: "They snarled like a pack of lynxes," he said.

"Never since our Great Defeat," added Ghost-snake, his voice quivering with triumph, "have the Six Nations of The Long House been obliged to look upon a Loup in his ceremonial dress or hear any Algonquin deliver to them any decree from any ambassador!—"

He flung up his arms to the sun and cried in a broken voice:

"Thou hast seen, O Uncas! Let loose thine arrows now, and veil us with thy plumes, because we are not many who go into battle, and without thy aid we perish every one!"

CHAPTER XXI

Dull Days

OF the return of our embassy to our camp in Cambridge there is nothing extraordinary to relate. We met neither with adventure nor misadventure. Our route was the same that we had followed.

Where we passed we met only with civility and politeness and with so little curiosity concerning our appearance and questionable presence in these parts that I could not understand the lack of interest displayed.

Never have I seen finer harvests than we passed along the Mohawk flats; the grain was very sturdy and heavily headed; the corn stood in height from ten to fifteen feet to the top tassel.

In Tryon County, from Schoharie to Caughnawaga, and from thence through Schenectady to Albany, we observed, as I say, very little agitation among the inhabitants, and no preparations at all for defence.

A strange and stupid indifference reigned everywhere in the neighbourhood of that stolid Dutch city on the Hudson. News of the Boston fighting seemed to stir within these apathetic burghers no quickening response, no latent patriotism,—not even any apprehension for their own personal safety. There appeared to be no slightest understanding that a great war, continental in its width and scope, had already begun in Massachusetts Bay.

It was plain to me that these dull folk never dreamed this war was destined to spread like a brush fire in a summer drought and set their frontier ablaze from the Lakes to the Hudson.

I saw no rangers, no levies, no troops of any description, except some Albany light horsemen, and a few militia at Schenectady and at the Albany fort. The only

notice these Dutch and wooden-faced folk seemed to have taken of the war was to drive skinflint bargains with such of our troops as passed this way to join our northern forces in the Canadian attempt.

Also, there was some preparation for the proposed council fire to be held at Albany between the Iroquois and our commissioners—and which I already foresaw was doomed to failure.

Before we left Albany I had the curiosity to enquire whether on all this vast frontier there were any military works at all except those remote fortresses on Champlain and George, and which could be no barrier to any invasion here.

I was told there existed not one fort, stockade, block house, or any fortification of any nature or description excepting only that ancient military work a hundred miles westward, called Fort Stanwix.

Riding out of Albany I glanced askance at these pot-bellied Dutch burghers dawdling before their shops and dwellings over a mug of beer or flip and smoking a long clay, or waddling about at bowls or quoits on the dusty green; and I thought of the roar of the cannonade at Boston, and the marching of thousands; and of that hellish and bloody uproar on Bunker Hill; and of the far more lusty roar that these stolid low-Dutch dolts would raise when the Canadas vomited red-coats and red-skins upon this rickety old sheepfold they called their city.

I thought, too, of Mr. Butler, and of his vast, shadowy, and sinister ambition: and of that blanketed and painted throng in the oak woods of Schoharie; and of their ominous silence when I delivered my last belt. The Iroquois were for war. I *knew* it. So did every man in our embassy. But when we said so these people only stared or yawned. So easily had *Schenectady been forgotten, and the †latter days of '56 and '57.

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* The massacre there.
† The massacre at Fort William Henry.

Well, as I say, our journey into Massachusetts was no more than a leisurely and uneventful return.

At Ashuelot Captain Hawkes paid off our Indians and we took friendly leave of Ghost-snake and Gadfly. My Captain made persistent inquiry for Witch-Eyes, but she had gone to Stockbridge—to the Indian Village—and there was teaching the rule of three to some score of little Loups—doubtless a part of that flock so assiduously herded by their minister, Mr. Sargent.

Long before we rode into Cambridge we could hear the majestic and unbroken thunder of cannon; and I was almost ashamed of the pleasurable thrill I experienced—an odd and almost savage joy. For war is a subtle destroyer of the calm and ordered mind—a perverter of sober citizenship; and weans one very stealthily from the staid ways of peace and the familiar drudgery of its harmless and drab pursuits.

Who leaves the plough or counter for the camp and drum is, unknowingly, forming a taste and a habit which, in after years, is not easy to break or to satisfy with the occupations of a homely and humdrum life.

Few veteran soldiers return willingly to pursuits of peace. And already I, who had scarce seen service, and who loved my farm, experienced a curious pleasure in the prospect of further strife. God forgive us, for we humans are strange folks, and, radically, are little altered or advanced from darker ages.

Even during the short time we had been absent great changes had taken place. Everywhere, now, were formidable fortifications ringing the besieged city; and a huge throng of people in arms had gathered here which was being welded and brigaded and drilled into a real and disciplined army, though a very mean and dingy one to gaze upon.

As for riflemen, they had come marching into camp in companies, battalions, regiments—men from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland—Morgan's men, Cresap's men, Ross's men, Thompson's men.

Riflemen from York County occupied our barracks; Morgan's corps had already marched for the Lakes; but more barracks were being erected, and we found accommodation.

I remember that first night of our arrival, our General Ward sent for us and we supped in his quarters with him and his military family.

He looked at us very anxiously when we made our report and gave an account of how matters stood in the North; and he asked my Captain to write it out in every detail, and to make two copies, one for the Congress and one for His Excellency.

From him, and his family, we learned something of events and of camp gossip; and how fearful had become my Lord Dunmore of American riflemen, and that he spoke of them as "those d—nd shirtmen."

As our company had marched with the XI Virginia, my Captain, myself, and our five men remained in hourly expectation of orders to join our battalion in the North.

These came at the end of the week, but, to my surprise, did not include me; and it was with unease and lively concern that I bade adieu to Captain Hawkes and his little squad who were to march with some Massachusetts reinforcements.

"What," said I anxiously, "do you suppose they mean to do with me? I seem to remain unemployed and have not been even as far as the Roxbury lines since our arrival."

"Ink-horn and quill," he said with a grin. "Yours is too fluent a pen, Nathan, to risk a bullet. And that's what comes of a Harvard education!"

But his jest, though I laughed at it, gave me deep concern, and I viewed his gay departure with so evident alarm that he changed his jesting and seriously reassured me, promising that I was destined for other activities besides those of a smug and scribbling secretary.

So he went gaily away with his squad and the infantry

of our line; and the receding clamour of their marching music left me very dismal and a prey to increasing apprehensions.

Which, by Heaven, were justified. There is something in me, born, that, somehow, foresees trouble. I seem to feel it within me, who am not otherwise of a nature to malinger or despair, and am, naturally, hopeful and inclined to careless assurance.

But that jest of Captain Hawkes' concerning quill and ink-horn, stuck in my crop and plagued me and so concerned me that, presently, a kind of vague but horrid certainty invaded me that my General intended to retain me and attach me permanently to his person on some such tedious business. And he *did!*

For, on the morrow, orders detailed me to his military family with a captain's rank and pay—which consoled me not at all—and when I reported at his headquarters I saw instantly that the worst had happened to me.

Well, my General was a good man who had an itch for writing. Never had I supposed there was such need of pen and ink in any army that ever primed a pan, or such amazing necessity for written words to carry on a war. I say no more than that, for I admired and respected my good General.

As for my Nancy, and my hopeless passion for her, so deep had it struck into me that, except when I was desperately at work, I felt ill of it, and strove to keep my mind free of her and through sheer dread of the ceaseless pain of my unhappiness.

Fortunately, they gave me even more work than I could well accomplish, and my hours were early, and until after midnight, and so the hours, for suffering were mercifully shortened. However, part of every night was passed, in the dull pain of longing, and my dreams were full of her, and of sorrow; and I grew so thin that my regimentals no longer set snug upon me.

My General one day noticed this and, saying that I

needed air and should take it and still be useful, sent me on a journey south to New Bedford with confidential despatches for a certain Captain, John Pell, to whom were to be issued letters of marque and reprisal by our Continental Congress.

Captain Pell was a merry mariner—a gentleman of enterprise and of ships; and did love above all else a dish of clams and a good glass of apple-jack toddy to wash 'em down.

Grandly did he entertain me with food and drink of the choicest, and, in the evening, with stories of prodigious whales and of wild voyages and of the chase of strange wild beasts in unknown jungles. Also he discoursed most virtuously concerning beauteous females of every hue and colour which he had noticed in his many voyages to distant shores, and said he was glad he had married none o' them. And he smoked and smoked and smoked in the telling of these vivid tales; and the last I remember was how a whale did wreck a boat!—and then, presently, was ashamed to find I had fallen asleep in my padded armchair, and that Captain Pell was still discoursing and drinking toddy.

That night I slept uneasily, what with the clams and toddy and a-dreaming of strange brown ladies and of whales; and also, I think, missing the steady thunder of the cannonade, as those, accustomed to sleep within sound of the solemn surf, and missing its deep diapason, slept put poorly.

Well, in the morning, I took leave of my kind Captain Pell, who promised me that I should soon hear of him, and also of a fellow skipper of his, one Captain David Griffith, who was to take command of their small fleet of privateers and set sail for whatever cargo they might lawfully seize in their quest for wealth and fame.

Now, having concluded my business in Southern Massachusetts, I started North, and, having business in Woburn, went around that way, hearing the distant bom-

bardment as I circled Cambridge, but keeping on, northward, to Woburn.

Here was a new company of rangers forming under a Major Such—another merry gentleman and well rounded of figure and countenance, who seemed to inspire vast respect and confidence among his recruits and vowed that the world should hear of him and of his officers; Captain Barrymore; Lieutenants Alderson, Mack and Hamilton; his Ensign, Mr. Dewy; and his first Sergeant, Blondy;—for, says he, "we are going after scalps wherever scalps are to be had, and God help the Butlers and Johnsons and Brants that cross our trail!"

I was told that Major Such feared nothing on earth, or in hell, either, save only mosquitos; and these, he said, no doubt made hell the awful place it was.

So, with a good supper and a Jack o' Medford Ale to keep me on my way, I got into my saddle and started for Boston.

There was no haste; I had made so smart a journey that I was already a day in advance of orders.

So, in the pleasant sunset light I cast bridle loose and let my horse take his own leisurely way through this pleasant land I knew so well.

Shadows lengthened, dusk crept from the woods across streams and field. A calm star was shining in the East. Others glimmered faintly as dusk deepened, breaking out everywhere overhead.

Slowly I travelled. Evening candles burned in a few farm houses; now and then a lanthorn gleamed from some barn.

But after a little while, as I journeyed on, the milking hour was over; no candles lighted house windows, now; all was dark and still and fragrant; and the stars' beauty grew resplendent.

Heavily and dully beat my heart; always the pain of the old longing was there,—sharper, now, as I came through darkness into Lexington, and saw Buckman's

Tavern all starkly dark save for a tallow dip in the kitchen window.

Was my Nancy still there?

Or had she set out with her invalid father for the Canadas?

I drew bridle and looked up at the window where I had stood upon my horse, Trumpeter, to woo her. For a moment a flood of tenderness and grief overwhelmed me so that I could scarce see for tears.

I drew a long, stern breath and flung up my face to the stars, but tears turned the stars into crooked streaks of silver; and I bowed my head and sat motionless and sick to the very soul.

Presently I knew that, at least, I could not go on until I had news of her. So I climbed heavily from my saddle, tied my horse to the rail, and clumped up the kitchen steps in my spurred boots and knocked.

A sleepy blowsy wench opened the door—some poor kitchen slattern a-cleaning up for the night.

I went into the kitchen and looked around.

"Do you desire to lodge and bait here the night, sir?" inquired the yawning wench, and added that she would awaken the tap boy and summon a maid servant who should light me to my chamber.

"I want none o' these," said I, giving her a bright shilling which seemed to overcome the poor creature utterly.

After a while,—she standing humbly at orders—"I suppose," said I, "that Mr. Justice Montague and his daughter have long since gone away."

"No, sir."

"What is it you say?" I asked in a voice that trembled.

"The gentleman and his daughter set out for the North to-morrow," said she.

"Are they still here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that certain?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Their negro servants have had us busy all afternoon and evening baking and cooking to provision their hampers against their journey. On that account I am still here at work and cleaning up—"

"Fetch me pen, ink, and a sheet of paper," I interrupted. "Is there any to be had?"

"In the tap-room—yes, sir—"

"Fetch it."

I seated myself at the freshly scrubbed pine table; and, when she brought me writing materials, I gave her a handful of new-minted shillings and fell to scribbling:

"Nancy:—I am writing in the tavern kitchen. All the house is asleep only save the kitchen maid who still scrubs her pots and pans here.

"Are you so merciless that you will not say a last word to me before we part forever?"

"NATHAN."

I called the maid: "Can you contrive to awaken Mistress Montague with every caution and give her this letter, and ask an answer?"

She said that she would try.

"Have a care," said I, "lest you also awaken Mr. Justice Montague."

"As for that, sir," said she, "Mr. Justice Montague now sleeps in the large chamber at the other end of the hallway."

"Well, then, in God's name, carry my message."

While she was gone I paced the floor, listening and hoping, torn by sudden and unknown passions now suddenly desperate and becoming too powerful for me to understand and cope with.

Listening I heard nothing. Went to the stairway. No sound. Came back and seated myself. And almost immediately the maid came in on tip-toe carrying a lighted candle, but no letter.

As I rose with anguish in my very soul: "Come, sir,"

she whispered,—"the lady will speak with you in her chamber. For God's sake, move quietly, sir! This will be a sad business for me if any in this house discover you."

"Very well," said I, "do you lead the way."

As we mounted the stairs my heart seemed like a loud drum in my breast, and every cautious footfall set stair and floor a-creaking. The servant maid led me through a corridor, up a small, spiral stair, then down a hallway to a closed door at the end of it, and there gave me the candle with trembling hands.

"Sure," she whispered in my ear, "you mean no harm, my gallant gentleman? She is so young and satin-soft—"

"No," I motioned with my lips, and warned her away with a gesture. When she had crept out o' sight I laid my hand upon the knob of the door and turned it a very little, so that it rattled very faintly.

As my hand fell from it, the knob turned slowly; slowly the door opened; and, in the candle light I saw my Nancy standin' there in her sheer white shift, her hair fallen all about her.

I went in. There was no light in her chamber excepting that from my candle. I placed it on the floor at the foot of a great chest of drawers and set a chair before it to shield the light. Then I closed the door behind me.

Neither spoke, for all that our trembling lips and hearts had to say to each other. She hung her head, presently, and slowly laid both slender hands against her eyes.

"I had—had, dreamed of you," she sighed, "—when they awoke me."

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy," I whispered. "I am so deep in love—in love—"

"I also. Oh, Nathan."

For I had taken her in my arms, and her warm soft body seemed to breathe a fragrance—the heavenly perfume of youth and chastity and of love itself.

"Will a kiss shame you?" I asked.

She did not answer. After a moment she put both arms around my neck but hid her head against my breast. . . . And, as the throbbing moments passed, presently she lifted her flushed face to mine, and, to my lips, her lips melted. . . .

"You shall bid me hope, my sweet," I whispered hotly against her face.

"No, my own."

"Shall I not hope, dearest of all on earth?"

"No, dear lad. . . . Dearest and tenderest of men."

"Because it would render *him* wretched and dishonoured all his days—might even end those days of the force of its own blow to his pride and trust in you: his loyalty to King and hatred of rebellion." I forced the words that stabbed me to utter, every one.

"If ever I give myself to you," she breathed, "his pride and heart would break. Our love *slays*."

After a silence I drew her closer. She rested her burning lips on mine.

That was the end. We both knew it.

Then her arms tightened around my neck; with bruised lips and throbbing throat she strained me to her till we seemed but one pulsating body.

Now, all tremulous with tears, our mouths joined and clung in a passion of grief and desperate love—clung while the warm tears wet our faces and every nerve and fibre of our two beings quivered for the other.

Suddenly she grew limp in my arms and her knees gave under her. I took her up and carried her to her bed, and there laid her, and there she took my face between her hands and kissed it and fell back to her pillow, covering her head with both arms.

I know not how I found my candle and got to the door and out; and finally out o' the house to my horse.

I seem to remember nothing more until, in brilliant star-light, I found myself stopped and challenged by a patrol near Cambridge; and had been like to have been

shot, so drunk and dazed was I . . . and so got me to my quarters, and lay on my camp-bed till dawn, all dressed, and utterly desiring that God would let me die.

Never, even in school, have I lived so many dull and tedious months as now I was obliged to endure in my quality of military secretary. I was cooped up in a house which shook all day and half the night with the cannonade, which only added to my irritation.

There were, of course, advantages in such a business, yet in nowise did they console me for the excitement and activity I desired. Perhaps I was a fool to pine for that action and excitement which, however dangerous and fatiguing, leads to preferment and to an acquisition of the military art. Yet, gladly would I have exchanged roof, bed and board in Cambridge for a sniff of snow and Northern pine, where that wonderful young General of ours was marching on Quebec.

My sole advantage, now, was that I got very early news of events.

Thus, at headquarters, we heard how the British warships continued to bombard the New England coast, and how they had burned Falmouth.

With unworthy irritation and envy I heard how my idol, Montgomery, took Chamblee, St. Johns, and Montreal; and that Mohawk Indians in their war paint were already fighting at the Fortress of St. Johns.

All this I had to swallow, and bite my quill. Once, only, was I invited to accompany my General; and on that morning I saw *The Lively* clear for action below the Point—and she lay so near that I could hear her drums beating to quarters, see the tomkins taken out, the guns loaded, and the matches burning. However, she never fired a shot.

Winter came early, and it was a vile, cold ending to that year of '75.

My memories of it are memories neither of suffering nor privation, but of a snug log fire; of a nightmare

filled with ink-horns and flying papers; of the boom, boom, boom of cannon; of ice and snow and the endless rolling of drums from the icy street.

The General and his family had a frolic on New Year's day. There was a punch; and we drank, "Death and jack-boots before wooden shoes and slavery!"

All very fine, but I was sick at heart.

Alas, we would scarcely have carried it so gaily that day had we known that, at that same hour, the fine city of Norfolk, in Virginia, was in flames. Dunmore, at last, had spat his venom upon the Province that had kicked him out; and the first seaport of Virginia was in ashes.

This new year of 1776 was a very miserable year for me, and I went about like a crabbed lawyer's clerk with a quill behind either ear and a green baize bag under my arm, a-trailing my useless spurs and sword till the noise of them did nauseate me.

If this were all war offered me then I had been better contented at home; and only when I remembered that some man was obliged to do this scribbler's business was I ashamed to fret at fate.

Once, indeed, I ventured to request my General's permission to transfer to a marching regiment; but he seemed so amazed and grieved that I never renewed the subject and settled myself to await my opportunity.

Twice I had written to Nancy. No reply came. Her silence made me gloomy and set me wondering where she might be in this world turned upside down; and concluded she had proceeded into Canada, and that this indeed ended it all for me. Moreover, I was mightily concerned for her safety.

But, very soon, it became plain to me that she would be safe enough there, for our army had met with terrible defeat before Quebec; and Montgomery—that splendid young paladin,—was dead, and Arnold desperately hurt, and our army shattered and starving and rotting with smallpox in the ice and snow of a ghastly wilderness.

All these things passed through my mind and were no more real to me than passages in a book one reads; and all I knew of any event was the gossip I heard where I sat mending quills and inking paper, and a-toasting my shins at a roaring fire.

Even in all the excitement and bustle outside my window, when it became certain that Boston was now to be evacuated, all I could perceive of this tremendous climax to our efforts was what my frosty window framed—troops marching to fife and drum; artillery galloping; horsemen arriving and departing; and a vast excitement in my General's military family with incessant running up and down stairs and the noise of spurs and sabres like a continual overturning of fire-irons all over the house.

I think everybody in North America excepting myself went into Boston as soon as the British left. I never set foot in it for weeks.

Regiment after regiment paraded and marched for New York. Five went, with artillery. I never stirred.

A little later, except our division, the whole army was ordered South. On the 27th, Sullivan's men marched; April 1st, another division; on the 4th, Spencer's men. And on this day His Excellency left Cambridge for New York, leaving the five regiments of my General at Dorchester, Beverly, Charlestown, and two in Boston. With one of these latter I went.

In June we all heard of the gallant action near Charleston, and how Sir Peter Parker lost the seat of his breeches.

In July the Congress decided upon Independence; and the declaration was read at the head of every brigade. I remembered seeing a regiment of Connecticut dragoons that day, all wearing the uniform they had worn at Louisburg. They were marching to New York, and very gay and songful.

It was in August that headquarters were removed to Boston, and two regiments stationed there.

The city was still in confusion; earthworks everywhere; streets torn up; the Common a fortress; and much abuse of private houses still visible. Hundreds of the older ones had been pulled down, also several churches and public buildings. But now people were returning in earnest, and the city was being cleaned and set in order, and new fortifications commenced on the surrounding hills to guard and secure it against another invasion.

My General's division had been left by His Excellency to garrison the city and surrounding military works. That situation in itself seemed a desperate one for me who had become heartily disgusted with continual inaction.

But what was infinitely worse was my continued employment as an inglorious scribe, and I felt hotly the injustice of it, who had been snatched from so fine a marching regiment of rifles to steep myself in ink to the very bones and carry a baize bag.

Headquarters were at Province House; and it was strange indeed to see our officers coming and going, and our sentries on guard where, so short a time before, the doorway and stairs swarmed and glittered with British gold and scarlet.

It was a devilish dull summer, those hot and uneventful months in Boston. Once only the drums beat to arms, and the troops marched to drive away the lingering British ships which still lay off Nantasket.

In August we heard of the desperate battle on Long Island. The news was so alarming that we called out the Massachusetts militia to reinforce us.

In September we learned that New York was a captive city and that a frightful fire had destroyed a large portion of it.

Toward the end of October we had news that Hessians were arriving and landing in New York.

All expected a British attack on this city of ours, particularly when, in November, Fort Washington was

assaulted and taken, and His Excellency drew his army into the Jerseys.

There was apprehension and gloom in Boston during this black winter now breaking upon us with storm on storm of ice and snow. Although there was little suffering and not much sickness in the city and the surrounding country, those were days of alarm and of grim reflexion; for few doubted that we should see the red-coats back again with the earliest red-breast.

Then, suddenly, came news of Trenton; then of Princeton! Such a wave of joy and relief swept over Massachusetts as never I think had buoyed any people above waves which they feared must presently engulf them.

Spring came neither early nor late that year, but, oh, how welcome, with its robins and blue-birds and apple-bloom and smell of ploughing and music of little brooks bank high. And not a single red-coat.

Often I rode to my home to consult my tenant and to observe how he conducted, and to be assured that the land should not run down but improve—for tenants are seldom conscientious and not often at pains to leave hired land any better off for its owner.

One day in June I returned from Lexington and had been afflicted with mixed sentiments, now melancholy, now content,—what with thinking sometimes of my Nancy and sometimes of my farm. The warm and scented beauty of this June afternoon evoked in me a gentle sadness; and yesteryear seemed centuries ago.

When I came to Province House my General and an aide were mounting at the horse-block, and he noticed me and called to me in a friendly voice:

"Nathan," said he, "it seems I am to lose one of the most valued of my family. Orders arrived at noon detailing you to Stanwix."

In the great flood of joy that filled me I contrived to control my features and to conduct with perfect politeness and with all the civility due to my good General.

I expressed a decent regret for severing so agreeable a connexion and thanked him for his unvarying kindness.

So we parted with every ceremony and friendly sentiment.

It was only when I arrived in my room that I dared give vent to my delight, and fairly rolled upon my bed in ecstasy at prospect of employment,—my spurred heels waving in the air and I a-laughing like a very fool,—and up in a trice to snatch and read my orders, and cutting boyish capers while reading.

"Oho!" I cried exultantly, "here is no ink-horn detail! Here's no pen-mending! Colonel Willet has no employment for scribbling staff-officers,—no!—not if he is that same gentleman who stopped the British troops, alone and single-handed, in New York streets, and took away their ammunition transport!"

In my delight I read and re-read my orders until I knew every word by heart; and what I was to do was to get me to Stanwix Fort as soon as might be and there report for further instructions, which—I did not doubt—meant active service.

CHAPTER XXII

Fort Stanwix

I RODE into Stanwix Fort amid a whirling, blood-thirsty cloud of deer-flies, on a hot July afternoon; and was devilish glad to get there.

Very different indeed were conditions in the Mohawk Valley from what they had been on my former journey into these remote regions; very altered the demeanour and spirit of its inhabitants. All betrayed concern; many seemed frightened. I conversed with many on my long road into the Northland—with both men and women, townspeople and those living on the rich alluvial bottom lands between Schenectady and this distant Western post called Fort Schuyler by some, but the ancient name of it was Stanwix.

At the eleventh hour the exposed condition of these settlers in Tryon County was now becoming alarmingly apparent to them. What began to arouse and alarm them was the sinister activity of the landed gentry—of gentlemen like Sir John Johnson, Guy Johnson, Colonel John Butler, and his strange son Walter.

Brant, principal war chief of the Mohawks, had gathered his warriors at Unadilla and showed his teeth to our Militia General Herkimer.

Hiakatoo and his Senecas were already in the Northern forests.

Sir John, breaking his parole, had fled from the Hall and was marshalling a regiment of Tory refugees called The Royal Greens.

Guy Johnson and old John Butler had raised a corps of rangers; and Walter Butler was with them.

All this was known, now; and from everywhere on this remote frontier a cry of fear and resentment went up—a lusty shout for help.

All this I gathered as I jogged along the Mohawk River, passing little villages, settlements, hamlets, solitary farms and frontier taverns. There were a few fine and substantial mansions of brick or stone, around which clustered the humbler homes of tenants and of settlers—the nucleus of some future town. But these lay thickest between Schenectady and Johnstown; and, farther west, except at the Flatts, I noticed no house of consequence.

As for troops, I saw small bodies of regulars and levies at Albany and Schenectady, and a regiment of militia marching near Caughnawaga—the 15th New York—but no other troops did I see until I rode my horse into the sally-port of Stanwix Fort.

Mine had been a long, solitary journey, and full of gravest reflexions, for never had I beheld so naked and undefended a country, nor one so valuable to our cause.

Here, in the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys, was the natural granary for our army.

Out of this fertile region should come the grain that was to feed the armies of His Excellency, who no longer could depend upon those broad farming regions to the south of us which constantly were overrun and ravaged by British armies.

And now see what already had become the situation in this productive region through stupidity and negligence!—all these rich lands at the mercy of any enemy who might feed fat here as they pleased or devote this vast territory to the torch!

Sobered by what I had seen and heard, deeply concerned though not discouraged, I walked my tired and fly-pestered horse across the drawbridge of old Stanwix and looked around me upon the only American fortress south of the Lake Forts.

What I beheld was a square fort with four bastions.

Otherwise there was the usual moat, palisades, glacis, and covered way; and, within, buildings flanking the parade such as barracks, magazines, laboratories and quarters for officers.

Fragments of three New York regiments composed the garrison—Willet's, Gansevoort's, and Weston's—less than a thousand men.

The fort stood on an elevated and cleared plain, the sally-port to the southeast and facing a cultivated meadow through which a brook ran into the Mohawk.

Here the Mohawk makes a great bend and the banks were cleared to their western and northern margin. But a menacing forest surrounded the place and I thought it came damned near to the fort on the west and southwest.

On my approach to this place I followed the Albany road which runs through cleared land in a northerly direction along the river; and not only were the infantry outposts very alert and inquisitive concerning my business, but patrols along the river stopped my horse, and an inner chain of sentinels made very sure of me even before I was challenged by the sentry at the sally-port. And everywhere I noticed working parties still repairing the defences, setting pickets, cutting sods, busy at a sort of horn-work near the brook.

Now, wearily dismounting on the parade, and resigning my horse and baggage to an orderly, I was conducted, presently, to the officers' quarters, and into a small alcove, partitioned, which contained a camp bed and a chair.

I could smell rations a-cooking, and was devilish glad when a soldier servant brought corn-bread and fish, piping hot, and a jack of beer.

This I lost no time in eating; and had but just finished cleansing me of my journey when there comes an ensign, very polite, with invitation to wait upon Colonel Peter Gansevoort in his quarters.

These were but a few steps distant. I was ushered into a small, plain, unpainted room with wooden walls

and ceiling, where, at a table, a very handsome and elegant officer sat.

Never have I seen more charming manners, and so simple and friendly that I was conscious of no embarrassment in my own deportment.

Colonel Gansevoort inquired politely regarding my journey, saying that he had not expected me to arrive all alone; and I was surprised to learn that I had been in some peril, because, for several days, hostile Indians had been roving about the neighbouring woods.

"Only last week," said he, "they attacked Ensign Sporr and sixteen privates who were cutting turf three quarters of a mile away. We suffered a loss of two dead, one wounded, and our ensign and six men missing."

"Sir," said I, astonished, "from what command came these Indians?"

He said: "It is evident, Mr. Holden, that you are unacquainted with military events in this region.

"The situation is serious, and you will please to consider as confidential what I now say to you:

"Burgoyne has beat our General St. Clair in the North and is driving him on Edward. Mr. Holden, it is something resembling a rout. The remedy? Reinforcements. And General Schuyler is sending them, and His Excellency promises Morgan's corps.

"Well, sir, the British have planned a vast and well conceived campaign. The object of it is to sever New York and all Provinces south, from New England.

"To accomplish this they have four armies already in motion. The objectives of these four converging armies is Albany.

"Burgoyne, marching with foot, horse, and the most formidable train of artillery ever seen in America, invades us from the North, driving St. Clair and Schuyler, and follows the Hudson to Albany.

"From below, Clinton marches out of New York City, northward, skirting the forts, and enters Albany as Burgoyne appears.

"From Oswego, Barry St. Leger, with Johnson's Greens, Butler's Rangers, and the Iroquois under Thayendenegea, or Brant, marches on this fort with orders to take it, then follow the Mohawk to Albany.

"And the fourth expedition, composed of rangers, irregulars, and savages, and led by McDonald, is to strike Schenectady through Schoharie and appear at the general rendezvous, Albany."

I stared at my Colonel, astounded.

He went on, calmly: "To oppose these forces now converging upon this frontier, we have St. Clair's force, now in retreat; and such levies and regular reinforcements as General Schuyler and His Excellency can gather and spare. And it must be plain to everybody that His Excellency dare not greatly weaken his small army in the Jerseys to send us aid.

"Otherwise, our military resources comprise the garrison of this fort, and the Tryon County militia—five raw regiments—under command of General Herkimer.

"We have no other forces on which we may rely. Half the Schoharie militia are Tory, and the other half dare not leave their homes to the mercy of such people. It is so in Tryon County as well—many King's people compose its population. As for the Schenectady and Albany militia, they are needed to defend those towns. And there's the situation, Captain Holden."

He leaned back in his chair and leisurely crossed one knee over the other. Presently he glanced up, carelessly, yet I thought it might be to notice what countenance I made at so shocking a condition.

It chanced that when he caught my eye I was more madded than disturbed by this monstrous and bloody design of King George to so utterly and barbarously ruin a people whom every sentiment of honour and humanity obliged him to protect.

"Sir," said my Colonel, smiling, "you seem enraged rather than appalled."

"I confess I am both, sir. But it is natural that anger prevail."

"Yes," said he, "—where the heart is sound. Also, I think that any man among us who has seen with his own eyes what atrocities our enemies commit, must experience only the firmer resolution to face this business to the end."

"Have you witnessed such, sir?"

"Yes," said he, gravely, "and not long since. I was standing upon the parapet about noon a week or so ago,—a fine, clear day it was,—and of a sudden heard a gun go off and noticed smoke in the near woods. And there came a little girl running with a basket in her hand, while blood ran down her bosom over her frock. . . . It was too late when we arrived in the berry thicket yonder: her two small comrades lay scalped and tomahawked. One of them was the little daughter of an artilleryman. . . . Well, sir, *that* is Indian warfare. Let those reconcile themselves to it who made allies of the Iroquois. . . . I am happy that you arrived in safety. These woods already are lurking spots for St. Leger's red scouts. . . . Not many days ago, Captain Gregg and Corporal Madison of this garrison disobeyed orders and went into those same woods where pigeons were flying. Poor Madison was instantly killed and scalped. We found Captain Gregg shot, tomahawked, and scalped. . . . He lies in the hospital at Schenectady, still alive."

I was confounded to learn that the red peril already enveloped this post.

Colonel Gansevoort sat for a while looking absently out of the window. Then he turned pleasantly to me:

"Captain Holden," he said, "you have seen some service in battle, both at Lexington and Concord and at Bunker Hill. You are young, hardy, a good shot, a cool head, of undoubted loyalty and courage, and have not only recruited riflemen but have led them. This I obtain from General Ward, from Mr. Hancock, from

Colonel Morgan of your regiment, and from Captain Long of your company in the XI Virginia Rifles."

I was so astonished that I knew not what to say.

"Also," he continued kindly, "you have proven your ability in diplomacy, having secured the Loup d'Orange to our cause, and also carried belts from our Congress to a body of Iroquois who were awaiting Guy Johnson on Fox Creek."

"S-sir," I faltered, "these were no difficult matters to accomplish—"

He began to laugh: "Modesty in the army is a rare bird, Mr. Holden, but you seem to carry it about well caged. Very well, sir. Let us assume that what you have achieved was easy to accomplish. But you shall not find it easy to do the business awaiting you. Do you know why you have been sent to me?"

"No, Colonel."

"Then I shall enlighten you. Schoharie is smouldering with treachery, ready to flash into flame. You are to watch those hidden fires and stamp out what you can.

"The militia, there, will not stir at the district call. Some dare not; others are Tories. Yet, you must contrive to recruit a scout there, and take command.

"With this little body of men you must first determine what is the most instant peril to the district, then contrive to watch it, thwart it, and either yourself defeat it or send word to those who can.

"How you are to maintain yourself I do not know. From where your men are to come I do not know. You have authority to offer them State pay, but no bounty. There is no Continental money to pay them; no equipment to offer them.

"Now, sir, will you undertake this business?"

"Yes, sir."

His kind smile softened his handsome and stern features:

"Is that spoken with rash and youthful zeal, or after proper reflexion, Mr. Holden?"

"Not thoughtlessly, sir. Some minds reflect swiftly."

"I know that."

"I think mine is of that temper, sir."

"Then you already have ideas upon this matter?"

"Yes, sir."

He smiled: "May not I hope to share your thoughts and purpose?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I have two friends among the Loup d'Orange. I shall send word to them to join me by the next express. Meanwhile, I shall go down the river to Mistress Wymple's Tavern and there learn what I may. From there I shall cross into Schoharie—"

"Well, sir, continue," he said as I hesitated.

"Colonel," said I, "already I seem to guess from whence and from whom the most violent onset is to be expected."

"Burgoyne?"

"No, sir. Walter Butler."

"Old John Butler's moody son?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, Mr. Holden, he is only a captain of rangers."

"I know it. But, sir, somehow I am convinced that he is the man this region ought most to dread."

"You know him personally?"

"Yes, Colonel."

He remained silent.

"Sir," said I, "that is merely my guess. I look for danger where that man moves. And shall be at pains to discover his whereabouts, and keep track of him, and, if it can be contrived, take him. For there is a man who, in my eyes, is the symbol of all that is violent and monstrous and relentless on this frontier; and his ambition is as vast as it is evil.

"Sir, there is little human about this man; even his preposterous pride is more like Lucifer's; and he hath no other passion—for even his frailties and immorality are more detached and demonic than the hot impetuosities of uncontrolled human passions."

My Colonel stared at me—politely—but it was nevertheless a stare.

He said, finally, and with his kind, humane smile:

"I shall not quarrel with your conclusions, Captain Holden; I shall only hold you responsible for them. . . . Sir, it would afford Colonel Willet and myself much pleasure if you would join our little mess for supper."

I rose and bowed very low to as fine an officer as ever I have lived to gaze upon.

CHAPTER XXIII

Men o' the North

THREE days later I was at Peggy Wymple's. From there I wrote and sent this letter by batteau and by way of Albany to Ghost-snake at Indian Village in Stockbridge:

"My friend The Ghost-snake:

"I need you. Come to me with your brother, and with such Siconnets, Niantics, Pequots and Shannocks as you can gather. The pay is State pay and no bounty, and no hope of Continental pay. Only young men who love their country and are not afraid of the Iroquois will come. Therefore, if you bring only one man I shall know that he is a real one.

"I give my love to you and to Gadfly and to Witch-Eyes.

"I am,

"NATHAN."

"Captain in Morgan's corps, and
Acting Captain of Scouts in Schoharie."

Having despatched this by batteau on which was a militia guard, I took the path back to the Tavern.

In the tap-room were some rough and dingy characters, somewhat boozy, all arguing, and all a-drinking flip; and, to avoid these, and get to my chamber, I went around the back way, meaning to enter through the cellar kitchen.

But in the garden saw my pretty Mistress Wymple a-plucking of late peas, and had a basket into which she dropped the pods.

She smiled at me and I saluted her and came into the garden.

"Well, Mr. Holden," said she, "have you a mind to aid me?"

"Yes, I will do that, too," said I, "but came upon another business. Madam," I continued with some bluntness, "are you a friend to liberty or are you otherwise coloured?"

At that she said, "Hush!" and laid a finger on her red lips, glancing somewhat anxiously toward the house. Then, bending to pluck a pea-pod, she whispered close to my ear: "I know not who those men may be in the taproom. . . . Is it certain that you are a Captain in the Virginia line?"

"Madam, will you be pleased to examine my commission and my credentials—"

She stayed my hand as I fumbled in my rifle shirt:

"You are too young to be a liar," said she, smiling at me. . . . "Well, yes, sir; I am a friend to liberty. . . . Though if it were known at Guy Park and the Hall and at Butlersbury—"

"I understand. Now, tell me, Mistress Wymple, have you any knowledge of any safe and certain man in these regions to whom I might venture to apply in a necessity?"

"To what purpose, sir?"

"To enlist as scouts in our cause."

She thought for a while, her pretty eyes remote, and absently picking pea-pods here and there among the vines.

"Let me consider," she murmured, "—there's old John Stoner, of Broadalbin, and his two boys—but they've enlisted. . . . And Fonda's Bush is partly Tory, so I do not send you thither. . . . Balston, too, is rotten with Tories. Also Galway. In Caughnawaga, except the gentry, I know not whom to trust. And it is the same in Schoharie and along the Mohawk. Those known to be true men have gone. The district militia call is advertised throughout Tryon. Friends to liberty are joining their regiments—and the summons is

for all between sixteen and sixty years. . . . I am wondering. . . Some of these back-countrymen ought to serve your purpose. Some of these trappers from Lake Desolation—these Coureurs-du-Bois. . . . Often they stop at my tavern. . . . And I notice that these forest-running folk are seldom King's people."

"Do you know any?"

She turned and glanced at the tavern:

"I am wondering," she murmured, "who those men in the tap-room may be. I passed not that way, but, as I came from the kitchen I thought to hear a familiar voice bawling out a song I knew—"

She smiled to herself, pondered a moment:

"If it's Kemper and the Rideouts, their politics are safe enough. Maybe you might persuade them. But they're rough folk, Captain Holden."

"I care not for that," said I.

"Come with me," said she, "and I shall have a peep at them from the pantry."

So we entered the cellar kitchen and crept up the stairs to the pantry; and there she slid open a little round shutter and placed one pretty eye there to see what she might spy out.

"It's Binny Kemper and no other," said she, whispering in my ear, "and the Rideout boys are with him,—and that great oaf, Caw Crow—his name is Mike but that is what he's called. . . . They're a rough company, sir,—a godless, forest-loping lot. . . . But no King's people, I warrant you."

"Are others there?"

"No, only Binny's gang o' trail-hoppers. . . . I pray you, sir, if they show you scant courtesy do not quarrel with them for they are lawless and violent folk in drink—and sometimes when sober, too."

"Madam," said I, "we shall not soil your tap-room or abuse your furniture, for if they molest me I shall transfer the business to the public road."

"Have a care o' them, sir."

"I will that, Madam."

I went around behind the barred till and came into the tap-room from the rear. There were four men there, all singing lustily. I did not wait to be noticed but took an empty leather jack from its hook and beat loudly upon the tavern table; which presently stopped their howling.

"Gentlemen of the forest," said I, as they turned to stare at me in vinous astonishment, "my name is Nathan Holden and I am Lieutenant in Captain Long's company of Morgan's Rifles, and further am Acting Captain of District Rangers. . . . I mean I would be if I had any rangers. I haven't. That is what I seek; hardy men not afraid of red-coat, Indian, or any other devil twixt hell and Halifax; men ready to take State pay without bounty,—there being no more Continental money in America, I think. Only patriots will notice so lean an opportunity as I offer; and I want none else. Come, boys, what's your answer?"

They seemed utterly amazed at my interruption and continued to look at me with a stupid kind of hurt resentment.

They were truly a rough company in their dingy buckskins and all plastered with wampum baldricks and girdles and hatchet slings; and the green, purple, or scarlet thrums hanging from sleeve and skirt and leg-seam in shaggy showers to their gaudy moccasins.

"Come," said I, "show me a little good will! Show me you have stout hearts! Life is something else beside love of self alone. God gave us a pleasant land to live in, and George Third tells us we must now die in it. . . . Or lick his royal boots. What do you say, lads?"

"Well, I'm damned!—and that's what *I* say, my jaunty young cockalorum!" burst out a great, lank, lop-eared, red-headed fellow whom I knew must be "Caw" Crow.

"No," said I, "you are not damned, but are like

to be if you take no notice of your country's needs. Even a rat defends its nest."

At that there was a sort of growling roar, partly laughter, partly disapproval.

A wiry fellow, with a reckless, handsome face marred somewhat by privation, exposure, and dissipation, got up in his stringy forest dress and came up to me with the rolling swagger of a bear.

"Hey," he said, wagging a soiled finger under my nose, "d'ye know what I eat for my supper every day? Hey? I eat *ears!* Human ears! And I like 'em fresh, not smoked. And I guess I'll help myself to yours right now—"

He reached for them and found both his arms pinioned to his sides.

"Hell!" he roared, "I'm a-going to chaw you into one big quid and spit you out,—that's what I'm a-going to do to *you!*—" struggling violently the while, and to no purpose.

"Come quietly outside," said I, "or I throw you out."

"You want to wrastle *me!*—you ha'penny dung-hill cock!" he yelled.

"Yes; I'll wrestle. Not here; out in the road."

"Leave go my arms!" he bawled, striving to bunt me.

But I shoved open the door with my shoulder and pushed him out onto the grass; and after us, pell mell, tumbled the remainder of that choice company to see the end of it.

I was at pains to keep my hold on this infuriated young man who wrenched and jerked and tugged to free his arms; and all the while he was bellowing with anger and promising to sup off my ears, nose, and other intimate features.

"Who do you think you are?" he shouted, "you Yankee jackass in tow-cloth? Why, you peg-sucking chipmunk, do you think to captain *me?* I'll take your hair for this—"

I flung him from me; he reeled back, gathered himself, and, the next instant, out with his broad-knife.

But at that the giant, Caw, and the other two Coureurs-du-Bois seized him, but could scarce hold him for his rage.

"Do you call that wrestling?" said I, breathing hard and watching him.

"He's right," growled Caw; "no French tricks, Binny."

"Come," said I, "here's a bargain: if you're the better man, Binny Kemper, you take my purse, and are free to follow your nose as you please, and in God's name. If I beat up your quarters, then you shall follow me in the name of God!"

"That's fair," cried the two Rideouts.

"Do you agree, Kemper?" I asked.

"I agree!" he yelled, "and I'll have the liver outen ye—"

They let him go; he came like a young bull; and I let him have elbow and shoulder which staggered him. And before he recovered his balance I fell upon that forest-runner and battered and beat him so that he reeled about, striking blindly; but I never left him for an instant, and rained blows on him, and belaboured him until he fell.

Up he got, blinded with blood and spitting it out; and I beat him down; and he crawled toward me on all fours and got up again; and down he went; and up once more; and then flat-bang! sprawling on the grass like a shot buck, rolling this way and that; but his legs were gone, and he lay and heaved his broad chest and twitched, gaping at nothing.

I was dirty, myself, but it was not my blood that I washed away at the well by the barn.

When I came back they had him in the tap-room, and he had a rag wet with vinegar at his mouth, which was all puffed out like a fish.

When he saw me he got to his feet; and, in the one eye now visible, I saw fear.

Yet, for all his terrible beating, he would have made at me again, but Caw shoved him back onto his bench with an oath.

"Yeh poor fool," he said, "this gentleman will kill yuh. Best put a proper face on't."

"A proper face!" added the younger Rideout, "—well, he'll be wearing the face this gentleman gave him for the next day or two."

I called to the gawking tap-boy and bade him serve us a jack all around.

I said to Caw: "I'd rather have that lad, Binny Kemper, beside me in my hour of need than any man I ever saw. I don't want a man who doesn't know fear; I want one who knows what it is to be afraid, and who is a game-cock to the bitter end."

There was a silence. Crow presently spat his quid of spruce:

"Waal, he's got yuh, Binny, fair an' squaar. . . . Yuh air obliged to take on and no dodgin'."

"Why don't you all take on?" I asked.

The tap-boy came with our foaming jacks of spruce.

"Come, lads," said I, "have you done anything yet for your country? I haven't done much. I'm a farmer. I haven't any help, either. I plough and sow and harvest what I raise; and have no other fortune—nothing to keep me except what my little farm yields. But I left it and went to Lexington and to Concord and to Bunker Hill. They sent me here to raise a scout and watch Schoharie. Here I am. I am doing all I know how to do. Binny here is going to help me. Won't you do the same, Caw? And you, Rideout—"

"Jim's his name," grunted Caw; "t'other's Jed."

"Caw," said I, "I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll shoot it out with you three men; my purse against your taking on."

"Wot kinda shootin' yuh mean?" drawled Caw.

"Whatever target suits you."

"I'll git me my old, cross-eyed slut of a gun," he

growled, "and I'll show you how to shoot." He emptied his jack, got up, took his rifle from the chimney corner.

"Wait," said I, and ran to my chamber, fetched rifle and ammunition, and hastened out to the road, where I saw all four o' them with their pieces, and in violent conversation.

When I appeared they looked at me and laughed—even Binny Kemper's distorted visage gleamed with humour.

"Am I to have my chance again?" he mumbled.

"No, you're mine," said I, smiling.

Then Caw paced off thirty yards to a maple tree, and, with his knife, peeled a three-inch circle on the bark. In the middle of this circle he drove a ten-penny nail.

I never had shot at such a mark, and thought they meant to daunt me with this jest.

"One shot. Powder's skeerse," drawled Caw. He plucked for grass blades; we drew.

Jed Rideout fired first. His bullet hit the circle an inch inside.

His brother, Jim, shot, and we found his bullet almost touching the base of the nail.

As I levelled my rifle I was certain that I had lost all three of these recruits, but I sighted without a tremor and fired.

I clipped a tiny fragment from the head of the nail, leaving a streak of lead on it.

I had two recruits!

There was no mistaking the altered regard of these men toward me after that shot. There was a new civility in voice and manner; and from his battered lips Kemper jested at them and winked his sound eye at me.

As for Caw, he came slouching back to the mark with his long-legged, shambling stride, and, as he took up his rifle, he looked curiously at me out of his round, pale blue eyes.

"Got me, h'ain't yuh, mister officer?" he drawled.

And even while he spoke his piece went up and the flash leaped through the white powder cloud.

We ran to the tree. There was no nail to be seen, only an embedded bullet exactly where it had been driven.

"Caw," I said, "that is wonderful. . . . And I'll say, now, that shot of mine was luck. I never before made so good a shot. I needed recruits and I just did what I could, and luck held—just as it did when I fought Binny—"

"Hell," mumbled Caw with a twisted grin, "t'wan't luck that was the sp'ilin' o' Binny Kemper. No, nor t'wan't luck that druv that nail, neither. Let's wet our jaws inside."

As we walked back to the tavern I dropped my arm on Binny's shoulder.

"I count on you," said I, "to teach me something of this forest art which you know so well. You must stand my friend in these strange forests, Binny, and see to it that I am educated in woodland lore as becomes an officer and a District Ranger. Will you do so?"

"Unh," he grunted.

In the tap-room I gave to the boy a newly minted shilling for himself.

Then I commanded the finest supper to be had, and a bottle or two of Madeira to crack.

"Caw," said I, "I'm sorry I lost you."

"Ah," he drawled, "some Tryon County man had to learn yuh a lesson. . . . Yuh may be a officer, but yuh're a sassy young cock o' the walk. . . . An' as to losin' me—waal, yuh h'ain't done it, neither. . . . 'N' I'm a-goin' along o' yuh for to learn yuh how to shoot."

"Hurrah!" shouted Jed Rideout. "Caw has been and took on along of us!"

"Y'old red-head crow," laughed Jim Rideout, putting his arm around him and giving him his jack to drink from.

Caw took a mighty pull at the spruce, winked at me, and turned a chilly eye on Binny Kemper.

"*Yuh,*" he said scornfully, "a-aimin' for to lift the Capt'n's haar! What d'yuh think was a-slappin' of your face—a baar? Gor-a-mighty, what a snout! An' don't you never tell me no more o' them Injun tales how you druv three St. Regis off'n that thar stinkin' pond o' yourn—"

"I drove 'em clean out of Lake Desolation!" retorted Binny in a muffled voice, "and if you don't mind your damned business I'll—"

"Here!" said I sharply, "have I a pack o' wild cats to sup with? Enough, Binny! And you, Caw, croak no longer on that stale jest. Come, then; are we men, or are we wolves that tear their wounded?"

"Huh," sniffed Caw, "it's plain who leads the pack, anyway." . . . He lifted his leather mug: "Stout hearts!" he said, "I give yuh many scalps! Hai-ee! Hah!"

"Hai-ee! Hah! Sa-wa-sah—say—Hah!" they yelled; and though I never before had heard the Iroquois scalp yell, I knew that I heard it now, ripping shrilly from the throats of these men of the Northern woods.

CHAPTER XXIV

In Schoharie

OUR first fortnight in Schoharie was, for me, a period of utmost vexation and distress of mind. My men were saucy, unruly, and had no slightest conception of discipline or its advantages.

Like the mass of our plain folk in America, they were of that arrogantly independent nature which is not a modest self-reliance but boastful self-assertion.

They were noisy; they swaggered; they were loud in contempt of Indian or Tory; they sauntered carelessly through forests; they strutted in frontier taverns; and—what was a hot humiliation for me—they bragged of their "Captin," of his bloody deeds at Bunker Hill, and swore there never had been in all North America so terrible and merciless a warrior as was I.

My God, I knew not what to say or do, because, while in my presence I had taught them to hold their imbecile tongues, no sooner out o' my sight and in some frontier tap-room, than their asinine boasting began.

There were a dozen hang-dog malcontents in a hamlet-tavern near Cobuskill—a notorious Tory den where adroit diplomacy might have afforded me information. And now, mark what happened!—for my four too zealous fools agreed among them to offer me a pleasurable surprise—and off they go to this Tory's nest and beat up their quarters, so that all that riff-raff fled with lamentable cries, and some ran even as far as Torloch and were not then done a-running.

And they fetched in four terrified prisoners by the heels—as a cat drags home her game to lay it on the door-sill and march about stiff-tailed, and purr and solicit

praises. I desired neither prisoner nor notoriety, and so expressed myself to those meddlesome clowns, and with so cutting contempt that, for the first time, they perceived that brawn and enterprise were one thing and a brain another.

They were vastly mortified and humbly contrite, and sat outside our camp all day long with sheepish and hang-dog looks. But only a *good* dog is so hurt, when, meaning to please, he receives instead of praise a hearty kick on the rump.

So it was with my people, who were sad and sorrowful and moped all day, anxious for notice; but I gave them none, but wrote out what information I had obtained, or darned my hose, or lay on my bed of balsam-tips and considered many things.

However, that day, my men obtained their first, glimmering conception of discipline. It is that way with a dog, also; for, if he be, within himself, truly a *good* dog, he will not repeat an offence.

Now, I had planned to patrol Schoharie in this manner:

There is a wild and savage country beyond the Wood of Brakabeen, and it is known in Schoharie as The Wilderhook.

On a little spring brook where it rises among ferns and mossy rocks on the very summit of a heavily wooded hill, I made a camp. Here were headquarters, rendezvous in peril or defeat—our secret rallying place, our last resort.

Here also was our secret hidden magazine and depot of supplies; and hither we carried all our reserve of powder, lead, flint, and food which we had been able to procure throughout the settlements of Schoharie.

From here we sallied out to see what we might spy in forest, field or along trail or road. Everywhere we asked questions,—of honest farmers and knavish inn-keepers, toss-pots, malt-worms, loiterers on tavern steps. We listened everywhere for scraps of news,—politely atten-

tive to old wives' highway gossip, to tedious tales of fishermen and hunters, to idle tavern tattle, to every kind of human conversation that might reveal some slightest item of importance to our cause.

This same Schoharie was a vast district, nowhere thickly settled, thinly for the most part, and, for miles and miles and miles, a howling wilderness where not even an Indian path penetrated, and only the vague trails of wild creatures interrupted the primeval desolation.

Settlements were thickest along the Mohawk and on the Schoharie for a little way. Scattering farms dotted the wilderness near Cobuskill and Torloch; and there were hamlets on Fox Creek.

But what most stirred me was to learn the situation of the manor house called Ashley Court, it being the seat of Sir Ashley Montague, who was uncle to my Nancy.

Like Sir John Johnson, in County Tryon, so was this great Tory, Sir Ashley, in Schoharie; and, though lord of a less estate than any of the patroons, and not invested with the high justice, the middle, and the low, yet a firm rock of loyalty amid the swirl and flood of rebellious waters, and a menace to the security of all Schoharie. Where, in his remote fastness of Ashley Court, was a secret meeting place for all foes to liberty; and from whence news could be despatched and spies sent out, and grain and fodder and cattle for Canada or for any invading force that marched into Schoharie to do our cause a harm.

For there had been a spider's web of Tory intrigue connecting Guy Park, Butlersbury, the Hall, Fort Johnson, with Colonel Service's residence—who was kinsman of Sir John—and from thence across to Ashley Court in the Southern wilderness of Schoharie.

All these sources of danger were close to the direct road to Canada. Two great Iroquois war trails ran through them; and both these forked again. For the great wild highway from New York to the West lay along these tributaries of the Mohawk River and of the Hud-

son; and here it was that the mastery of the North must be decided.

That mastery meant either that the grain and cattle raised here should fatten the armies of King George, or should save His Excellency's ragged army from starvation.

What had we to defend the source of supplies so vital to our existence as a confederated people?

Scarcely a battalion; only one fort.

All this, and with infinite patience, I explained, little by little, to my men. It was in this manner that the first understanding came to them—that our coming into these parts was no mere matter of bullying or attack or reprisals,—not a quest of prisoners or of scalps, or infinite pains taken for petty purposes such as personal quarrels, solitary rifle duels, local ambushes.

No! As tiny springs are the source and sustenance of all oceans, so should the result of our efforts here trickle toward that reservoir from which His Excellency only knew how to draw those life-giving waters which alone could animate our fevered country.

Thus I played the schoolmaster to my men.

And always, paramount in my mind, loomed the dark and shadowy purpose of Walter Butler.

I remember our first positive news of him and how obtained.

The night previous we noticed fires on the Long-berg, Clipper-berg, and Fire-berg. The next day we went up on these mountains and found the remains of Indian signal fires.

We had been roving from Fountain Town and the King's Road through to Vrooman's Land, and for several days had been watching suspicious activities among seemingly idle men below Brakabeen and Clyberg. Here we saw Adam Crysler, Dirk Bouck, John Becker, and others too tedious to mention, take their guns and go off toward Brick House,* a tavern I had every reason to sus-

* A tavern standing at the forks of the Albany and Schenectady roads.

pect. It was conducted by a certain Captain Mann, who officered a company of the 15th New York Militia and who alleged several reasons for not turning out his company when the District Militia call went out.

Now, some three quarters of a mile further on, or more, perhaps, was another public house maintained by one John Lawyer, and whose political complexion seemed that of a chameleon, for I never truly discovered to which party he naturally was inclined. But expediency ruled him, and he was all things to all people, and seemed to practise no treachery, either, so whoever was his guest might feel safe on that score.

So my men and I kept to the fence which runs along the woods by Lawyer's, and there I left Caw Crow and Jim Rideout; and, in Lawyer's, left Jed Rideout and gave him six pence to pay his reckoning.

Then I took Binny Kemper and, keeping to the woods, set him to watch Brick House whilst I went in to learn what I might from this company gathered there.

As I came to the tavern I heard a noise of talking and a stamping of horses from the stable yard. Going around by that way, I discovered a score of nags all saddled and bridled, and holsters on some saddles and a sabre dangling upon another.

Now it chanced the day before that I had washed out my rifle-shirt at Fountain camp, and wore a green coat and cocked hat, not intending or even thinking of disguise.

But when I came to Brick House, by the stable yard there I saw Captain Mann's wife, who instantly enquired if I were the Forester officer from Captain Butler's Regiment of Green Coats.

"Madam," said I, "how do I know I am addressed by a friend to King George?"

"You shall know that," said she, "by the pass-word *Oswego,* and the countersign, which is *Stanwix."*

"Very well," said I, "I am satisfied."

She meant well, no doubt, but the silly creature had

doubly armed me; and into the tavern I went, and there were Adam Crysler and Dirk Bouck, whom I had learned to know very well by sight, but who never before had seen me, and some score of men who wore scarlet patches on their hats and coat collars, and were busy a-drinking newly brewed kill-devil.*

They all looked at me and Dirk Bouck came over and enquired my business; so I whispered the pass-word and had his countersign. Then he took me into the parlour and Crysler followed and closed the door, and shook my hand, naming himself and Bouck.

"Where is Walter Butler?" says he.

"With the army at Oswego," said I coolly; "and where did you expect him to be, Mr. Crysler?"

"Was he not to meet McDonald at Ashley Court, to arrange for a raid into Schoharie?" demanded Bouck in astonishment.

"I had not heard that," said I very honestly. "St. Leger marches on Stanwix."

"Of course," cried Crysler impatiently, "but Walter Butler was to go first to Ashley and there meet McDonald, and lay out a campaign so that McDonald should come into Schoharie when St. Leger storms Stanwix."

"He said nothing concerning that to me, Mr. Crysler," I replied in a surprised voice.

"My God!" cried Bouck, "have we had our labour for our pains? Captain Mann hath engaged to take his company to McDonald, and here is Adam Crysler, who pledges us a hundred red-patch soldiers the day we hear McDonald's guns in Brakabeen Wood!"

Said I, and very grave: "Gentlemen, too much zeal is dangerous; and I wonder that you have so rashly conducted without positive advices from Colonel Barry St. Leger."

At that they gazed at me aghast; and I shook my head and seemed to ponder painful thoughts.

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* Brewed with cider instead of beer, as in Flip.

"In heaven's name, sir," said Crysler, "why then have you come to meet us in Schoharie?"

"I come to see what you loyalists are about," said I sternly, "but had no thought to discover you had taken all into your own hands and were presently preparing to instruct my commander in the rudiments of military art!"

They were both alarmed and chagrined by the rebuke.

Said I: "Gentlemen, you will, if you please, instantly furnish me with your rolls, your lists of those in Schoharie who are friends to Government, and with a list of your arms, provisions, resources, and plan of campaign.

"These papers ought to be examined by my commander as soon as may be."

I added with a cold stare at these two men: "Doubtless you will receive your *orders* at Colonel St. Leger's leisure and convenience. Until that time, gentlemen, it were the part of sense and prudence to control your zeal."

They swallowed that in flushed silence. Then Bouck went away; and presently returned with the records I demanded. I took his despatch pouch and all; saluted; turned my back upon them and walked out of Brick House.

My men and I were miles away on a wild, sunset road running south through misty wastes of swale and tamarack, when there came a-galloping an officer in a green uniform and headed hot for Schoharie.

So we stopped him, searched him, took away his papers, tied him on his horse, and carried him with us until we came to Hellberg Tavern, where were sure friends to liberty; and a scout already out on the marshes to watch the lower Indian trail that runs that way toward Minnisink and the head waters of the Delaware.

He was a powerful, sullen-faced young man, this Forester officer we had caught, and eyed us all as a trapped beast eyes its captors,—and yet with a kind of dangerous dignity in the dull but watchful gaze.

I could learn nothing from him and did not choose

to threaten, but gave him to the post at Hellberg Inn to guard whilst my men ate supper.

To Binny Kemper, whom I now knew to be sure and devoted, I entrusted all the papers we had taken; to Caw-Crow and to the Rideouts I gave our prisoner with instruction to deliver him only to General Ten Broeck in Albany, together with all documents carried by Binny.

Our prisoner had a purse stuffed with gold; and we left him to command what food and drink he desired. I would not permit my men to take money from a prisoner, only arms and papers.

It was starlight when all was ready. We cautioned the post at the Tavern; I bade my men good-bye, and there, in the still night, we parted, I taking the Ashley road, they, with their prisoner tied on his saddle, filing off on the travelled highway that led to Albany.

CHAPTER XXV

Ashley Court

A GREAT wind had come up, which was strange, for the sky was magnificently spangled with stars. Yet, all about me in the dim and silvery lustre of the constellations trees, bushes, marsh reeds and swale were blowing in a mighty night wind flowing through leagues of darkness out over the waste ends of the world.

And thus, bending to breast the gale, I came about midnight to a crossroads where was a gibbet. And, near it, I noticed a human shape—a man, upright, standing where the roads crossed, all alone in the night.

I am not easily stirred to fear, yet I felt chill flesh roughen on my body, and my hair stirred.

For I saw this man's eyes quite plainly, as one sees an owl's in the night, yet his shape was but a shadow.

As I came to him I wavered, for he barred my road; and what with the gibbet, and a few bones still dangling in the chains, and the vast solitude and loneliness of earth and sky, and the strange wind rushing through darkness, I chilled again all over me, and roughened to the nape of my neck.

Then out of his blowing cloak he fetches a pair o' pistols; and, strange as may seem, I felt the warm blood returning to my heart and was truly glad that this shape was human and not a thing that came o' nights to mew and whine around the swaying chains and bones above.

He said no word, nor did I; and so stood peering at each other and balancing on uncertain legs in the moaning wind.

"Well, damme," says he hoarsely, "who are you?"

"Sir," said I, "you can pick those bones overhead to more advantage than you can pick me. If I had carried a fat purse, you should have smelled my rifle muzzle long before you pulled your pistols."

"A forest-runner," said he in disgust; and he shoved his pistols into his breast.

He was a huge, big lout in buckskins, yet with the face of a boy; and now he stood scratching his head under the coonskin cap, and regarding me with a sulky mien as though mine had been the offence.

At that I could not forbear laughing: "Who the devil are *you?*" said I.

"And you?" he growled; "are you a friend to liberty?"

"God save our country," said I. "What do *you* desire that God shall save?"

"The same."

He came slouching up to me; and now I noticed a rifle strapped to his back.

"You are a strange highwayman," said I.

"And there you are wrong," said he, "for I am no highwayman at all, although they made books and broadsides about me, too. I'm a bee."

"What!" I demanded astonished.

"I say I am a bee. For while I travel I gather honey—or purses. Also, if disturbed, I sting."

"And otherwise you merely buzz?"

"Like a bullet. Who are you?"

"I asked *you* first."

"Did I not tell you I am Jack Mount?" he said, peevish as a great school-boy.

At the mention of so formidable a name, I was silent. All knew of Jack Mount, the highwayman. Yet, it was said he took only Tory purses—having a particular hatred for fat magistrates—yet kept not a groat for himself but gave all to the cause of liberty.

"Ha!" said he, vexed, "you have read about me in a dirty little book with a gibbet on the cover, which they

hawk about the streets! Is that why you stare at me with scant civility?"

"No," said I laughing, "and you conduct like a spoiled child, Mr. Mount."

"I am lonely," said he "—and thirsty. You need not tell me there are brooks a-plenty where I may wet my muzzle. It's a jack o' flip I need to stay me. . . . Sir, I have seen great sorrows in a twelve month."

"Where?"

"At Quebec."

"Were you with Montgomery?"

"Yes, sir—with others of Cresap's corps."

"Were you with Cresap?"

"Aye. He's underground in St. Paul's churchyard. . . . A brave lad. . . . And they killed Montgomery and crippled Arnold, and the pox rotted us; and now we're hunted out o' Skeensborough, and I was sent to Albany for help. The damned skinflints gave us none. And here be I on a back trail with empty belly and ragged rump, and I know not if my comrade Cardigan be alive or lying scalped and dead in some filthy Adirondack pond."

"Friend," said I, "my regiment is Morgan's."

"Ho!" cries he, "they were there, also—a handful only—but worth a regiment. Friend, thy hand!"

We shook hands till I winced in his huge and sentimental grip.

"Come, friend Mount," said I, "let us make a camp of it somewhere out o' this wind. I have in my haversack," said I, "bread and cheese and cold venison, and a certain fat stone bottle which, if you kiss the lips of it, giggles like a pretty maid in April."

At that, like a great bear on his hind legs, he seizes me.

"Friend o' my heart!" roars he; and, "come to these arms, old comrade!"—when I could no more escape them than the hug of any other bear.

"Aha!" said he, taking me under the arm and smack-

ing his lips, "honesty is ever the best policy, and always I have said it, and now maintain it! Why, friend, would you believe me?—yet I took my pistols and the air one pleasant night last week and on a sweetly pleasant road near Albany. And in an hour I took seven purses as fat as the fat Dutchmen out o' whose fat breeches I fished 'em!"

And he fell a-laughing and a-slapping of me and of his own huge thighs till I could scarce breathe.

"Three hundred minted guineas!" he cried, "and my shot-bag crammed full o' shillings! You should see the faces they pulled. Scalp a Dutchman and he yells. Rob him and he's too near dead to squeak!"

"But," said I, shocked, "these Albany burghers are friends to liberty."

"Maybe," said he, "but my regiment is in rags and they boiled their moccasins for supper. Day after day I sang that dreary ballad in Albany, and none heeded me but sat and swilled their beer and sucked their pipes and stared at me. . . . So back to the inn I went and told my sorrows to my pistols. And, would you believe it, friend, I found them shaking both my hands and bidding me cheer up. And then—*would* you believe it, friend?—they took me for a stroll along the river—a pretty night—and the old Dutch gardens smelling sweet—and honest merchants all a-emptying of their tills and jogging homeward for to count their gains. . . . Well, they're counted." He roared with laughter in the roaring wind where we had come among great oaks to shelter us.

"What did you with your guineas?" I asked.

"I have a Jew-friend, Saul Shemuel, and gallant in our cause. It is to him I bring my little offerings."

"I like not that," said I bluntly.

"And why not?" said he, aggrieved as an unjustly chided child.

"It is robbery," said I, disgusted.

"Maybe. But it clothes and feeds my regiment."

"What?"

"Friend," he growled, "did you think I saved a ha' penny to my own purse?"

"You did not?"

"No," he bawled angrily.

"And you in rags and hungry?"

"Damnation," says he, "did I not say that it pays to be honest?—and here am I met with you and invited to bread and cheese and to kiss a coy and pretty jug o' flip?"

At that I fell a-laughing so that I could not speak and was scarce able to pull the jug from my haversack.

"Drink, ragged rifleman," said I, "and patch thy ragged gullet; and let hazard patch thy breeches!"

He set the stone bottle to his lips very gravely. It giggled as I said, and like a very wanton, too.

"Another life saved to Satan," says he, still very grave, and held out a huge paw for a slice o' bread and cheese.

"Whither are you bound, Jack Mount?" I demanded as we sat munching under the wind-rocked trees.

"I go a-trudging back to Edward to tell my General there are no troops to be sent from Albany to aid him."

"Jack," said I, "you speak bitterly but you are wrong."

"I? Wrong?"

"To ask for troops in Albany."

"What? And Burgoyne and ten thousand lobster-backs on the march? And Red Hazel's* Hainau jägers—with their moustaches twisted stiff with shoe-blacking?"

"I know. But, Jack, there *are* no troops. God knows we need them in Schoharie, for we are like to be in a sorry pickle soon, what with St. Leger's army marching on us, and McDonald's. . . . My scout of five

* Riedesel's cognomen as pronounced by both British and Yankees.

caught a horseman of the Indian Department at sundown to-day. I sent his papers to Albany, but read them first. And with Sir John and old Indian Butler, are Brant and half a thousand Iroquois in their paint. And all headed for Schoharie."

After a moment he went on munching. "That's bad," he said gravely. "What forces have you?"

"None."

"Well, there are troops at Stanwix."

"A hundred miles west."

"None in Tryon?" he demanded.

"General Herkimer's division is mustering."

He nodded. "Well," said he, "I am bound for Varick's, but I shall pass that way later. If this same General Herkimer hath troops to spare he may send some to our General Schuyler. I shall learn that at Varick's where there is a certain Captain Ormond who awaits three of us—two of us, Murphy and Ellerson, are of your regiment, friend."

"And my company—Captain Long's. What is it, a headquarters scout?"

"No doubt. Schuyler himself should beat Varick's. It's trackers he wants."

"Whom do you track?"

"I think our game is like to be Walter Butler."

"Well," said I, "you lose time looking for his tracks in Tryon, for he's expected here in Schoharie to confer with McDonald. And it's to Ashley Court I am bound to learn what I can concerning his whereabouts."

Mount shrugged his huge shoulders, kissed the bottle, wiped his face and looked at me.

"He's on the Kennyetto, friend, where there's an Iroquois fire, and a dog-faced slut of a witch called The Toad Woman to talk to them of war."

"Where did you hear that?"

"By an Oneida runner yesterday."

I thought for a while. "After all," said I, "the Kennyetto is not far from Schoharie. I have a positive

knowledge that Walter Butler will come to Ashley Court."

"Very well," said he; "do you go thither, while I lope along to Varick's, and between us we should have news of this murderous young man."

"Do you know him?" I asked.

"Perfectly. I meant to slay him, once; but young Cardigan would not have it so. . . . Well, there's a mad wolf loose in the North. A *mad* one; mark that, friend. And if ever you see him, hold not your hand but slay him as soon as may be and in the swiftest way convenient."

"I cannot murder him," said I.

"Well, then, he'd do that office for you if he thought you an enemy. I tell you, friend, I know Walter Butler. And a greater villain lives not upon this bloody earth! And I bid you have a care when you track a beast of that kidney, for he will feign ignorance of your pursuit and presently ambush you. So, shoot when God gives you opportunity, for all patriots in Tryon will do the like, in hopes to rid the Northland of the most dangerous beast that ever denned there. . . . Is there a swallow left in yon pretty bottle?"

That night we slept very snugly in our blankets, where we had supped under the great red oaks. In the fog of morning, a little after day broke, we finished what crumbs were left us from the night's supper; then we clasped hands; and he travelled North and I South. And I think each of us knew that, in the other, he had found a friend.

I liked the look of that black gibbet none the better by daylight.

The wind had died out; the chains no longer swung; for the moment, at least, those poor bones were at rest.

But Lord. What a place to rest in!

Here through the watery light a plain spread, set with little pools. Spectral forests ringed it; grey silver

water mirrored a silver sky in which was no palest tint of colour.

Across this waste ran a road, and melted away in distant mist. There was no least sound in this place save the far, faint complaint of unseen plover awaking in the rising mist.

When I had traversed this melancholy waste and had come again to higher ground, where woods bordered the rutty road, I presently perceived a fence, and a gate which had been taken from its hinges and set aside so that the road was open.

Within a mile I had met three more road gates,* all lifted from their hinges and leaning against some tree or pasture fence.

That made me wary, and I wondered what cavalry was expected.

And now, in rough, ferny pastures along the road, I saw beef cattle—great reddish-black creatures, that stared at me as I passed and turned to their wild provender again.

There were sheep, too, on rocky slopes; and, far on a hill, I saw a shepherd and his shaggy dog which ran toward me a little way and barked as I passed.

Now, on either side of the road stretched great fields of standing grain—wheat and rye already stacked; standing oats, buckwheat, and corn. And, everywhere in distant fields, men at work and many blacks; and I could see harvest-wagons moving—the first, excepting army wagons, that I had seen anywhere in Schoharie save a few old two-wheeled carts near Cobuskill.

A man on a fine horse cantered up to the fence as I passed and looked down at me sharply. He was clad roughly but comfortably and wore a tie-wig and beaver and ruffles on his shirt.

I said to him that it was a fine morning, and he replied it was like to be rainy.

* Public roads frequently were crossed by private fences with gates. Military orders required their demolition to permit the operation of cavalry.

"From where do you arrive, friend?" he added, turning his horse and keeping pace with me.

To which I prudently replied with another question, inquiring whose fine fields these might be.

"Are you bound to Ashley Court?" he asked, always eying me.

"Oh," said I, "are these Sir Ashley's lands?"

"They are, sir." Of a sudden he put his horse to the low fence of split rails, jumped him into the road, and ranged alongside of me.

"Friend," said he, "I have asked several questions of you and have had no answers but only more questions. These be uncertain times. Come, sir, I am Jock Anderson, Bow-meester to Sir Ashley, and must ask what may be your business in these parts."

"Well," said I, smiling, "I hope I am among King's people at last; and make no doubt of it if this be Sir Ashley's manor."

Said he: "Do I understand you to say 'God save the King?' "

"I say, 'God help him!' " I replied heartily, "for any man who journeys through Schoharie can see rebellion in the very children's eyes."

"As bad as that?" he asked gravely.

"Worse. All Tryon is in arms to march with Herkimer. Schuyler and Gates but lure Burgoyne on to his destruction in the North. Stanwix awaits Sir John with murderous impatience. And God only knows what the Schoharie rebels mean to do to McDonald. Is there then no friend to Government—nobody in authority—to warn Sir John and McDonald, whose rash advance may lead them to destruction?

"My God," he said, "we had not heard that matters were so desperate. Sir Ashley is in Canada to take certain measures with Carleton and Haldimand.

"But Captain Butler arrived from Oswego last evening, to await McDonald at Ashley Court."

I appeared delighted. "Ah," said I, "Captain Butler and I are acquainted."

"Look you, friend," said he, "you should lose no time in acquainting Captain Butler what is the true condition of affairs in Tryon and Schoharie. Surely at Oswego they must be ignorant of this peril, for Sir John is already moving, and McDonald has entered Schoharie from the South."

Said I, "I ask nothing better than to confer with Captain Butler."

Already I had discovered, across the rolling country, the manor house of Ashley. It stood on a low rise of ground to the right of the road,—a fine house of native stone, flanked by many barns, out buildings, barracks of grain and hay, servants' quarters, slave quarters, log houses of the tenantry,—all the batiments usual on so great a place as now I perceived was Ashley Court.

A dry wall faced the road, and here the Bow-meester left me with a civil salute, and rode back to his farming; and I entered the wide swing-gate.

Smoke curled from the high chimneys of grey limestone; window panes glistened; the lawn under the great maples was newly mowed, and everywhere I saw flowers growing in neatly kept beds, and blacks at work on a gravel path.

On the door-step lounged two light-horsemen wearing red jackets turned up with green, and had had their sabres drawn.

Now, among papers delivered to me in Brick House, had been duplicates; and these I had saved to recommend me.

I had, now, to show Mr. Butler, a set of papers writ by Captain Mann, which contained returns of all royalists in the district.

Also I had a memorandum in Captain Mann's hand, and signed, recommending himself to McDonald by bearer, and advising invasion by way of Brakabeen, and a rendezvous at Brick House.

These I now fished out, mounted the door-step. The light-horsemen immediately crossed their sabres in front of me.

"Officer of Schoharie Irregulars on particular business with Captain Butler," said I, coolly, "Captain Holden."

They detained me while a footman came, took my name and business, looked at me closely, and went away.

He came back presently and showed me into a large, fine room, hung in red damask and full of books and fresh cut flowers.

Here, with sufficient civility, he offered me a chair, and instantly withdrew.

And out of that chair I almost fell when, in the doorway, I saw my Nancy standing and gazing at me, her face as pale as death.

I know not why I had been so entirely convinced that she was in Canada—perhaps because she had told me that was her father's destination—and also because she never had replied to any letter directed to her at this house.

I got to my feet; she came into the room,—came close to me; stood with clasped hands crushing her handkerchief:

"Nathan," she whispered, "what brings you here?"

"Duty. . . . I never dreamed you were here."

"Duty!" she repeated, and turned whiter still; "—are you *spying?*"

"Yes."

"My God—my God!" she said—but her lips were almost voiceless.

"Nancy," I said, "I am quite at ease, being certain that you never would betray me—"

"But my father! Nathan—you are mad!"

"Is *he* here?"

"Closeted with Captain Butler in his chamber just above us. You can not remain!"

I knew then what fear meant, but instantly throttled it and let my wits work. And even while they were desperately busy, I put up one hand and drew off my

neck cloth. Then, unlacing my shirt, with the point of my broad knife I pricked my chest, and held my neck cloth to the wound until the red stain spread. Then I folded it across my face, so that only my right eye showed, and a three-day growth of beard on a dirty face.

"Tie it," I motioned.

She tied it while I laced my shirt and drew my green coat across.

"Now," said I, "I have much lying to accomplish, and ask of you only to use your wits so that I may leave by some other door, because the light-horsemen saw no bandage when I entered this house."

Her breath was coming hard and unevenly and I saw she strove to steel her mind to endure this situation.

She stood listening for a moment; came close to me: "Have a care of Mr. Butler," she whispered. "It means death if he suspects you. . . . And I warn you, also, that McDonald is expected here at any instant."

"I know."

Never did I see in any features desperation so lovely, eyes so melting in voiceless supplication.

"I—I could fetch you a horse," she whispered; "you could ride for it!—"

"Hush, my own! All will be well."

"Oh, Nathan—"

"Compose your features."

"Yes."

She stood with slender hands clenched against her heart: walked to the door and listened; sped back to me.

"You are to know I love you," she breathed. "Let that arm us both in this hour."

"I am unchanged," said I; "therefore all is well. . . . I wrote you three letters."

"They never came."

After a moment: "And you, Nancy?"

"No, I did not write to you."

"Had you engaged not to?"

"Yes."

"Then all is well," said I, happily.

"No," she said, "all is ill and very hopeless."

At that moment we heard a door open above. Nancy's hand flew to mine and I kissed it. Then she sped from the library into the parlour across the hallway, and I heard her at the spinet, tinkle, tinkle, and her voice discreetly pitched in a careless air, half hummed, half sung:

"Sing, little bird, in yonder tree,
And tell me who my Love shall be,
Or brown or fair, or small or tall,
Who one day shall appear to me
And at whose pretty feet I'll fall—
Sing, little bird, divinely sing,
And bid me wear a wedding ring!"

My verse! And she had made a little song for it!

Mr. Butler, descending the stairway, heard it too, and, without noticing me, he stepped into the parlour. There, for a few moments, I heard their mingled voices, and grew wroth at the gallantry in his. It was plain he was entreating her to sing again that song; and finally she consented; and when she had ended there came another flood of protestations and gallant compliments—laughter, too, and a ripple of the spinet, and then his voice in song, tender, persuasive, in perfect taste:

"There is no promise in the sky,
Like the blue promise of Thine eye,
O almanac without compare!
When I consult Thee, book divine,
Though neither wise nor weather-wise—
In Thy bright gaze I read the sign,
The sun shall shine and skies be fair."

And tinkle-tinkle went the spinet as he ended, and I could hear her voice in laughing praise—and merited!—for the damned youth sang with taste and discretion.

I know not how long he had lingered there with his airs and compliments and his infernal graces to ensnare her, had she not risen and come to the hall, and there made him a gay curtsy and whisked her away upstairs, laughing, light-footed, and was gone.

He looked after her, and waved his handkerchief, yet already his dark eyes had become remote, and were shifting absently toward me where I sat in the library.

Then that shadow on his lips which did duty as a smile faded; and he came into the room, and looked at me; and presently made me a civil bow which I rendered him.

I asked him politely if it were necessary that I recall our acquaintance to his recollection; but he said he remembered me at Peggy Wymple's.

"You were, then," said he, "on a particular mission if I am not in error, sir."

"To arouse Schoharie to our cause," I nodded.

"With what success, Mr. Holden?"

I fished out my papers; and he took them and looked through them.

"Well," said he with a frown, "here is no great encouragement for Colonel McDonald."

"No," said I, "rebellion is rife in those parts."

He gave me a gloomy look: "Where got you that bloody head, sir?"

I told him how a rebel patrol had taken the green-coat officer, and that I had been there.

At that his eyes grew blank and yellow and remote, and he sat gnawing his delicate nails like some dreaming demon hatching horrors.

He said: "McDonald should arrive here to-day. I have no doubt of the result if he marches from the south when we strike Stanwix from the west. . . . The Fort should fall in twenty-four hours. . . . I think the rebels in this district will be taught a lesson when we let loose the Iroquois."

He gave me a terrible look.

"That," said I, "means destruction to all, regardless of age or sex."

"To *all*—regardless of age or sex," said he with a kind of grin.

"Sir, does the end to be attained warrant such measures?"

"It is the proper way to end this rebellion," said he violently, "—lay the frontier in ashes from Albany to Oneida Lake! Make of it an uninhabited desolation! Scourge it, burn it, ruin it, extinguish *all rebel life within it!* That is how rebellion should be cleansed out of this disloyal land! Leave not one spark of rebellion alive. Leave neither wolf nor wolfing. That is how *I* make war."

"Sir," I contrived to say, though my gorge rose and my hands itched for his throat, "if that be the King's policy, then, presently, he shall have left but a fragment of the population in these colonies."

"I care not what may be his policy," retorted Butler fiercely, "so that this future empire be saved to the Crown. His Majesty's incompetent Generals talk of mercy and reconciliation. To what profit have they talked? They are beaten in arms at Trenton, beaten at Princeton. We were flouted on Long Island, mocked at White Plains! What has Burgoyne gained by his magnanimous proclamations? The derision of every filthy rebel north of Albany!

"Of what effect has been the humanity of the brothers Howe? To encourage Yankee insolence and daring. I know not," he burst out in a fury, "what others may do, but I know very well what *I* shall do. And I am minded to cut this cancer to the bone. Better this continent should perish utterly than live to wax mighty and become the everlasting enemy of England. And I am resolved that, if others be weak, I shall not be so. If others prate of persuasion and humanity, I shall hold my tongue and strike!

"By God, sir!" he cried, springing to his feet and

pacing to and fro with his swift, graceful stride, "the only true mercy is the swiftest. I mean death! Death for one and all who dare stand in rebellion against Government! Finish the business. End it! Clean these colonies. Burn every rebel city. Hang every rebel leader. Scour the filth from this continent!"

He turned his crazy, blazing eyes on me:

"Once," he said, "at Peggy Wymple's I spoke freely in your presence. I was in wine when I spoke. But never mistake that what I said then I dare not now repeat in cold blood. Sir, I care not what others think; I *know* what of blood and quality are in my body and my brain. I know what is my ambition! And I shall pursue it through a very sea of tears and blood—if need be, through the flames of hell itself. Do you understand, sir? I shall save this continent to the British Crown, and shall rule it, paramount, save only for the source of all imperial power—His Majesty, the King of England!"

I gazed upon this madman with an astonishment that left me numb and dumb; and he went striding about the room, his delicate hands now folded, now clasped behind him, now clenched or twisting or plucking at his bitten lips.

When, finally, he noticed me again, he came to me, sweating, icy pale, and his eyes now great depthless wells of shadow.

"Can I count on *you?*" he asked in a ghastly voice that had no tone or substance.

"You can count on me—to the death," I said. *"Yours,"* I added to myself.

"I thank you. I know how to reward true zeal. . . . Will you remain until McDonald arrives?"

"No, sir. Those red-patch militia of Captain Mann considerably concern me." God knows that was true enough, too.

"Are they not sure?"

"I mean to find out, Mr. Butler, and, that, before McDonald rides into the Wood o' Brakabeen!"

"You are right, sir. . . . You may count on McDonald. Say so to Captain Mann. As for Herkimer's Tryon County militia, I warrant you we shall account for them. You need entertain no apprehensions, Mr. Holden. The fall of Stanwix is certain. There will be no quarter given to that garrison; none to Herkimer; none in Tryon and Schoharie; none on the Mohawk from Oneida to Albany."

He stood a moment in thought; then: "There is in me," said he, "a magnetism and an eloquence which will rouse every loyal heart in Tryon to arms. No other man can accomplish this as I can. Have *I* not given the hatchet to the Iroquois?

"And when Stanwix is ours, and Herkimer is fled, then I shall go into Tryon and raise all that vast country, and arm it, and march on Schenectady, on Albany, on New York itself!

"God!" he cried wildly, "I shall end this business before these red-coated, gold-laced Generals know what I am about! This war is *my* business. It is a revelation! *My* business—my very own! And it shall be ended."

After a silence: "Yes, sir," said I, "your business shall be ended, God willing."

His lost gaze no longer marked me, even when he returned my parting bow,—even when he reached absently for the bell rope and pulled it to summon a servant.

We went into the hallway together. Here he bowed again, turned on his heel, and mounted the stairway.

Until he had disappeared I made pretence of fumbling at my bandage while the footman waited to hand me my hat and rifle—a stupid oaf who gaped at my bloody bands and seemed vastly perplexed to see me in such a state.

And now I heard a light step on the stair, and knew my Nancy had not failed me.

Down she sailed with her chip hat tied on in pale blue ribbons, and a basket on her arm. And: "Young rifleman," said she in a cool and languid voice, "come

to the orchard and you shall have a pound sweeting to munch on your journey."

I thanked her with rustic awkwardness, took hat and rifle, and followed her out through a rear door, across a porch, and down into an orchard where great sunny-tinted apples hung amid green leaves.

"Here," said she, and "no, there is finer fruit beyond. . . . Follow me, young soldier. . . . Here lies the way. . . . Across the road—yonder—behind that grove—there is—is finer fruit—"

We were among maples now. Still she led on, more swiftly—then, of a sudden, rested against a tree-trunk.

After a little she straightened up her body and turned a pale face to me.

"Now," said she, "get you to your people!"

"Yes; I must go," said I.

I drew off my bloody bandage and put it into my pouch. Then, in a low voice, I bade her farewell.

She said: "I would have you take me in your arms,—but dare not. . . . Come to this house no more."

I made no answer.

"Nathan, I—I desire your—lips. . . . And dare have none of them. . . . You shall never come here more."

Twice I made to leave her, and the third time she stretched out her hand to me, and I saw her blue eyes all wet, and the fever burning her parted lips.

Thus I left her there among the maples.

CHAPTER XXVI

The North Ablaze

IT was on the first day of August that I came into our secret camp at Wilderhook and found there all my men awaiting me, Binny Kemper, Crow-Caw, as we now called him, and the two Rideouts, who had delivered documents and prisoner to the guardian* of the young Patroon.

All the news they could give me was that a battalion of Glover's Regiment was on the way to Albany, and that the light-horsemen would march on Schoharie if McDonald rode into Brakabeen.

Sick at heart was I to learn that we were to expect no more than a handful of light-horsemen in this swiftly approaching crisis; but would not for the world have seemed despairing or pulled a doleful face before my men.

However, they were no fools, and could very well guess what must be the fate of Schoharie if Stanwix fell and the Tryon County militia were cut to pieces.

I enquired concerning my Indians, but they had heard nothing of them, and there was no sign of them on Fox Creek where I had bade them look for us.

Well, time was flying in this powder-bin called Schoharie, and the candle stuck into it was burning perilously close to the powder.

I resolved, now, to hide my intentions no longer, but to come boldly into the open field and show my colours.

But first I drew Binny Kemper aside and conferred with him, because I had come to trust him greatly, and had much confidence in his judgment.

* General Ten Broeck. The young Patroon was not yet of age.

He agreed with me, however, that whatever we were minded to do must be attempted now or never. So I called the others and I said:

"Two years ago, counting from the 19th day of last April, the first shot of this war was fired at Lexington in Massachusetts. This is August—two years and four months since war began. And not one hostile shot has been fired in Schoharie, or anywhere on this frontier excepting only in this July near Fort Stanwix.

"Lads, the Northland has been slow to understand, slow to arms, slow to muster and to march.

"I say it not in reproach that we have been slow to show our teeth. For there broods a viewless horror, here, over all the land, and that nightmare affrights no one in the South.

"I mean the Iroquois. And I think it is because we, in the North, are reluctant to arouse this monstrous spectre of the wilderness that we are slow to declare ourselves against King George.

"Lads, the last instant for hesitation has passed. The red-coats are marching on us; the red-skins are in their battle paint.

"One half of the inhabitants of Schoharie are King's folks at heart. It remains for us to arouse and hearten and arm the remainder.

"I know of only one way to do this, and that is to get us to Lawyer's and take horses, ride the district, and put these men to shame who will not answer the militia call! Will you go?"

They said, very slowly, that they would not desert me, but that it was useless to argue with men who refused to join their regiments and march to distant parts, and leave their wives and children to the mercy of an Indian invasion.

That was true; and my only hope was to prove to these poor folk that a crushing defeat of the enemy in the field was a better protection than to face him here, each man in his own defence of home and family.

Well, we went to Lawyer's that same morning and there procured horses. And day after day we rode openly through Scholarie to preach our crusade in villages, in hamlets, at remote and lonely farms, riding road and path and trail and across country from river to river, from creek to creek, from mountain to mountain.

And ever our warning cry rang out: "Drop your scythe, take your rifle, join your regiment, and beat the enemy. There is no better defence against fire and hatchet than a disciplined army in the field. The call is out. The brigade is mustering; the regiments are ready to march! Is your name to be a shame to you at roll-call?

"Then march, in God's name, so that your children shall not hang their heads when their children ask them what *you* did at the great battle on the Mohawk!"

In some Dorps we were cheered, in others jeered and threatened. In Fountain Town they cheered us, and thirty young men marched. In Foxes Town we were mocked and cursed and promised a halter, yet there came to us a young woman, weeping, who dragged a sheepish husband by the collar to force him to enlist; and another, —an old, grey woman, that clutched a clay-pipe in her teeth, and drove with a besom, and kicks and blows, two great louts of boys to be taken on and marched to Herkimer.

At the Fire-Hill we met an express who gave an account that the Canajoharie Regiment and the Caughnawaga Regiment had already marched.

At Punchkill and Cobuskill we took on eighteen men for the Schoharie Regiment, and twenty-four promised.

I called a meeting at Torloch, but they were planning a block-house and would not budge.

We rode through Vrooman's Land and induced several to the army—people like the Hagers, the Vroomans, Van Dycks, Eckersons, Beckers, Van Slycks; and we made Derrick Laraway take the oath of allegiance and swear to it by the holy evangelist.

On the Clipperberg an old man of seventy desired

to take on, but we were obliged to discourage him, which made him angry and very shrill with cursing us.

In the Clauver Wy* we met two Iroquois Indians, who were headquarters runners from my Lord Sterling, with secret despatches for General Schuyler. And those dusty, weary messengers gave us the first news that some Loups and Siconnets were descending The Fox Creek, and were already in their battle paint.

We now baited at a log inn near Stone Araby, where was a militia company a-drilling, but not yet decided to march, the settlement being much exposed to the enemy, and many women and children there without any defence.

In such places I found little to say, and truly pitied such folk; for, were my Nancy so situated, and no protection if I marched, then I know very well that I would not abandon her, and that's flat and all there is on't!

Now, in Fountain Town and in other Dorps I had contrived to arouse the settlers sufficiently so that they held meetings and selected and embodied several groups of men, each group to serve for one week as a scout, and then to return to their harvests and be relieved by another group.

On that day we had been riding on a forest trail, seeking out solitary settlers; and we had been aware that an Indian had dogged us all the morning; but, though we set traps for him, we never caught him.

Now, along the right bank of the Schoharie, midway in the woods between the two creeks, we encountered a scout of five, such as I have described, six days out from Brakabeen. They were bursting with news, having been on the Mohawk, beyond the Flatts, and had there beheld five fine Tryon County regiments marching in column on Stanwix which, already, they assured us, was blockaded by St. Leger's army, and was being hotly bombarded by Sir John's artillery.

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* Clover-Land on the Little Schoharie.

At that I sent Caw-Crow to Foxes Town, where a smart boy of fifteen had promised to ride Express for me; and bade Caw-Crow despatch the lad to Albany to warn the light-horse against McDonald.

Jed Rideout I sent on to the Fox Creek to discover my Indians and carry them to Wilderhook without delay.

Then, apprehensive and in a sullen humour, I took Binny and Jim Rideout and galloped back toward Brick House.

I know not why I did this, for it was rash and unthinking, and all knew us, now, in Schoharie, and more than one lurking lout might have tumbled us from our saddles with an ambushed rifle.

When we were yet a considerable distance from Brick House, I saw a Schoharie Indian—a sly and treacherous wolf named Ogoyenda—slink across the open woods ahead and, leaping a fence, make toward Brick House at full speed to warn any company there of our coming.

That, doubtless, was the dirty dog who had been a-spying on us all morning. But so annoyed was I that, in this hour, we must also be menaced by that renegade Captain at Brick House, that I paid little heed to what I was about. And rode into a hornet's nest.

For, as we galloped up, out o' Brick House, tumbles close to a hundred red-patch militia, and all a-shouting and snatching to catch our bridles.

Now, whether from fright or fury,—I know not which,—I spurred straight into them, making my horse pirouette and rear and trample among them.

Binny, too, whirled his horse, and Rideout knocked down a shrieking man and rode over him.

The next instant we were free of them and riding furiously down the River road, our ears filled with their shouting and roars of rage. Why they did not fire upon us, I do not know, for we had injured more than one among them. But, on both sides, in Schoharie, it seemed as though all men still hesitated and hung back, awed by

the awful conflagration which the first shot fired must start.

Well, we came through "clean"—as Tim Murphy* used to say, only that he pronounced it "clane." And I was considerably ashamed to have led my men into such a pickle; but Binny Kemper was laughing, now, and cleaning blood from his rifle-stock where he had cracked the noddle of some ambitious red-patch; and young Rideout, greatly excited, was all for swinging our horses and spurring through them again.

We were merry as we left our horses at Johannes Ball's house, who promised to send them back to John Lawyer on the morrow, and gave us food and a jack of early ale such as only is brewed in Schoharie, and has no equal anywhere else as far as I know.

Mr. Ball, also, told us that Herkimer was marching to Stanwix and meant to fall upon Sir John; and that in Schoharie was to be raised eight companies of exempts as garrison, which would free our militia for distant service.

This should have been done long ago; but even at this hour it would help.

Mr. Ball further informed us that our magazine for equipments and accoutrements would remain at the Lutheran Church in Fountain Town, and at the stone church in Fox Town; and that all people living south of Baltus Krysler's must come armed to any meeting held in Fountain Town Church.

When we had eaten our fill and had emptied another jack of Schoharie ale, we pulled foot. And then and there I was secretly resolved that, when the tempest burst upon Schoharie, I should instantly possess myself of horses sufficient to mount every white man and Indian in my scout.

It was a hot day, the west hatched thunder; and when

* Timothy Murphy, the most celebrated scout on the frontier, and sometime private in Capt. Long's company, Major Parr's battalion, of Colonel Morgan's XI Virginia Rifle Regiment.

we came into the Wood O' Brakabeen sweat ran from us and wetted through our coats and rifle shirts.

But, what with our adventure, and the certainty that tension of long suspense must presently be ended with this battle brooding in the West,—and maybe also because of Mr. Ball's new ale,—we three were very merry as we strode along toward the Wilderhook.

Now, the Wilderhook swarms with deer as well as with savage beasts; and on our way Binny slew a doe. He said she was a barren one, but how he could tell I do not know. When we had drawn and quartered the game we divided the burden, and so approached our secret camp, still merry and carelessly content with life, which, to-morrow, might turn into death.

There was a fire burning there. We smelled it a long way off; and now we discovered it; and I saw Caw-Crow and Jeddie Rideout and, with them, I counted eight Indians.

Happy, indeed, was I to behold them and gaily I called out to the Ghost-snake and to Gadfly, who came smilingly to grasp my hands and pat my face and shoulders.

Lord! how were these old schoolmates altered now! —for all sign of civilization had vanished from their persons; and they were in their battle paint, heads tufted and a-droop with feathers, and naked to the waist-belt.

And now to me they made known their fellows whom they had brought to me—all in their paint save only two.

First there was Nawaa, a Loup Shaman, in deer-skin, but painted and profusely feathered, who took my hand in his and looked intently into my face as cunningly as a fox.

*"Ni saki-hi-timin," said he, gravely mischievous to learn what I remembered of his tongue.

I smiled and pressed his hand in acquiescence, and:

†"Awenenak kit angweiak?" I enquired demurely.

* "We are destined to like each other." (Algonquin)
† "Who are your companions?" (Algonquin)

At that all laughed. "He is a real Mohican!" they exclaimed. *"Ni sakihanan."

They came to take my hand, Niooi, a Siconnet, and Cloud, a tall Narragansett, both in red paint, and next, Samoset, a gaunt Shannock, hideously barred with white and black; and last a wild-eyed Pequot called Miauhoo, with the flat forehead and high cheeks of a panther, and whose smile was alarming though doubtless well meant. He was painted a bloody colour and wore blood coloured feathers and carried two hatchets in his belt, which I never had known any Indian to do.

Well, I was content with my †Onagounges scout, and counted them once more at a glance. Then I perceived still another Indian—a graceful youth in doe-skin —who had not come to take my hand but stood by one of the huts looking at me with a half-smile—

"Witch-Eyes!" I cried, astounded.

She sprang into my arms, and I kissed her on both cheeks amid a shout of laughter.

"Little devil-doctor!" I cried, "what has possessed *you* to arrive with this painted war-party?"

"Nathan," she said in a breathless, happy voice, "when you called out my brothers I ran to our minister in the Indian village and told him that my brothers were going to war and that I desired to go too—"

"You mean to tell me that Mr. Sargent let you come?" I demanded incredulously.

"I come to doctor your scout!"

"What! A Wabeno!"

"No," she explained excitedly, "I have hospital and medical supplies in my pharmacy. Gadfly carried the pack."

"Where got you any such knowledge, Witch-Eyes?"

"From our apothecary. And have been school nurse in the Indian village for more than a year, Nathan."

But I was concerned that she should make one of a

* "We like him."
† Eastern Indians: the Canienga expression.

war-scout on this frontier, and knew not how to take it or what to say to her.

As all my Indians had carried packs as well as blankets and rifles, I called to Nawaa and took Witch-Eyes by the hand and showed them a bark hut where they might store their traps and where Witch-Eyes could sleep and have her pharmacy.

The witch-doctor who was ever regarding me out of his sly and humorous little eyes, said that it was well; that all was well; and that all should be well with us.

However, to insure this, he proposed to beat his drum while our food was preparing.

Witch-Eyes looked at me to see how I would take this, then laughed, and, calling to Gadfly to carry hither her pack, went into the bark hut.

I went to the fire and found that my men were using the Indians civilly, and that all were busy preparing food, and seemed happy, declaring that now we were to have a real feast.

Nawaa had put on his feathered cloak and taken his witch-drum, and was squatted under a giant pine where, presently, he fell to drumming and then to squalling and a-rattling of dried peas in a gourd.

All my Indians looked at him with deep interest, not entirely free of fear, for I noticed they avoided passing too near him, but preferred a wider circle when on some errand.

Witch-Eyes came from her hut in a kind of under-dress of fawn, bare armed and her hair in a cloud, and fell to baking ash cakes. Also she had a dozen squirrels on spits of ozier which the Siconnet had knocked out of trees with his arrows; and into these she put slivers of pork and kept her eye on them to baste them,—a pannikin set under each.

There was much merriment and chatter at the fire, and my three Christian Indians were not gayer than the others. All the Loups spoke English, and all but the Shannock understood enough of it.

So we cooked our dinner whilst Nawaa made magic with his drum and slyly observed the progress of the cooking.

All were nigh starved, and he as impatient as any.

I went and stood a little way from the Wabeno, meaning to ask his opinion concerning Witch-Eyes; but hesitated, reluctant to approach him.

*"Pi wabamicikeg!" he called out to me presently; and I walked over to where he sat busily drumming and shaking his gourd.

†"Ni gwinawi totam," I said with a shrug; "ni gwinawi inenindam, Nawaa."

‡"Kinawa?"

§"Nin."

He laughed: "You leave her," he said; "Witch-Eyes is also Wabena. No bullet slays her."

Then he began to beat impatiently upon his drum and look sideways at the cooking venison, and lick his lips:

"It is good medicine I make," he said loudly; "I learned it from an Ojibway and he learned it from a Dakotah, and he from a horse-riding witch-doctor of the plains!"

He drummed furiously for a moment or two, then said very crossly: "The west wind smells of blood!"

I looked at him.

"A battle," quoth he, "and dead chiefs lying in the woods."

"Ours?" I asked involuntarily.

"Both. But it is well for our people."

The befeathered prophet looked at the cooking venison; lost his temper:

||"Kitci kinoeny ni pwa wisin!" he said sulkily.

I could not help laughing. The food, also, was ready,

* "Come (over) and see me!"
† "I don't know what to do; I don't know what to think, Nawaa."
‡ "You?"
§ "I."
|| "It seems to me that I have waited a long time for somebody to give me something to eat!"

and the Wabeno hastily divested himself of his witch-regalia, and came over to where all had seated themselves for a friendly feast.

There was much gaiety and jesting and good natured banter; and all seemed imbued with the spirit of comradeship and good will—even the narrow-headed, panther-eyed Pequot, Miauhoo, whose alarming countenance and swift movements continually startled me.

When at last all had eaten their fill, the Siconnet, Samoset, called for a story. I bade Binny fetch tobacco; all filled their pipes—the Pequot's was part of his war-axe!—and Nawaa began the ever-thrilling story of those dreadful battles under the ground between some wretched Iroquois and a Wabeno.

It was a hot afternoon and we covered the fire; and even we white men sat with bodies naked to the belt in the green shadow of the pines.

When Nawaa finished and all applauded and demanded more, I rose and went to examine our stores, uneasy concerning the feeding of all these men.

When I came out of the bark shed, I found Witch-Eyes loitering near; and she came to me in her pretty way and took my hands in hers:

*"Ni wi kopesew," she said shyly.

I laughed: †"Ki wi anwenindis-ina?"

She shook her pretty head.

‡"Awi kopesewin!" said I, curiously.

"It concerns my Black Captain," said she.

"Captain Hawkes?"

She nodded.

"Have you seen him again?" I demanded.

She nodded.

"Well," said I, "what of him?"

§"Sakihik."

I looked at her, astonished.

* "I wish to confess."
† "Are you repenting (coming here)?"
‡ "Go on and make your confession, then!"
§ "I am loved by him."

*"Sakiha," she said, "Iade-ka, Nathan."

Then I understood that she was to be our Black Captain's wife, and she laughed and laughed to see my astonishment.

"Oh," said she, "he came a-horse to Stockbridge and he went to Mr. Sargent. 'Reverend sir,' said he, 'I have known no moment's peace since I parted with your little Witch-Eyes, sister to The Ghost-snake and to the Gadfly. If she will have it so I desire that she wear my ring as pledge until I return from Saratoga.'

"So our kind minister sent for me where I was studying my pharmacy in the girl's school—" She giggled and pressed my hands—"Oh, Nathan," says she, "when I came to the parsonage and saw my Black Captain, instantly some witch-bird sang loudly in my ears, and I knew—I *knew* what he had come for!—"

She held up her slim hand and I saw on it a ring of gold.

So, for a while, we chattered eagerly about this happy affair; and she told me that, after he went away to march with his battalion of rifles to Edward, she considered what she ought to do who was to have a husband who fought for liberty. And so came to the conclusion that she must learn to help the sick and wounded; and, when I called out her brothers, she obtained Mr. Sargent's permission to accompany them to Schoharie.

We walked slowly back to the circle where Nawaa was telling a wonderful tale about †Shingebis and the North Wind; and was blowing with puffed cheeks and shrilling through his teeth, and plunging one hand earthward to show how the wise bird dived, when, of a sudden, all ears caught a distant sound in the forest, and all heads turned, instantly alert.

Now, from the westward, through the forest a man appeared, riding a tired horse, and himself so weary that he could scarce keep his saddle.

* "I love him. (Give me) your hand, Nathan."
† A favorite legend and song.

I knew him. He was Jan Bouck, and I had begged the Committee to send him to the Flatts for news.

God knows he brought a plenty.

When he came to our fire he would not dismount but asked for water, and drank in his saddle, and bathed his face and hair.

Binny took the kettle from his shaking hands and he sat there dripping and kept passing his hand across his brow where his long hair hung wet.

"—A great battle in the West," he said. "The dead lie everywhere. Herkimer is dying, Colonel Cox is dead, and Major Eisinlord,—nearly all our colonels and majors are gone. They loaded wagons with our dead. . . . No family in Tryon but is in mourning at this hour."

"Sir," said I amid a terrible silence, "are you telling us that we have been beaten?"

At that he pulled himself erect, and began to laugh in a ghastly fashion:

"No, sir," said he. "We went at Sir John's Greens and tore the entrails out of them! We turned on the Iroquois and on Butler's Rangers and beat their skulls to a pulp! The woods are littered with dead green-coats. We've torn Hiakatoo's Senecas to pieces. The Mohawks ran, and our Palatine Regiment stood and slaughtered them with their bullets. We hold the field! . . . But, oh, God! what woe is fallen upon Tryon!"

He pressed his temples with both hands and a mighty shudder seized him.

"Oriskany," he said in a dull voice, "—the battle at Oriska. . . . Oriskany. . . . Dead men in the ravine, on the hill, in the forest."

"You *saw* this?" I asked hoarsely.

"I fought there. . . . I fought with Spencer and his Oneidas. I tell you the woods were all splashed over with blood. . . . We went at the Greens with knife and hatchet, butt and bayonet, and tore the guts from them! . . . We could hear the Mohawks' death yell in the forest. Brant's Iroquois—howling their

losses to the sky! . . . Willet came out of the Fort and took Sir John's camp and baggage and all his standards. . . . That was the battle of Oriskany. . . . And scarce a family in County Tryon but mourns some loss."

"The Fort?" I asked.

"Safe. St. Leger's cannon play on it to no purpose. . . . But we could do no more. We were spent." . . . He groped for his bridle; "Captain Holden," said he, "I must go on."

"Yes," I said, "your news must be sent on to Albany. . . . Have a care at the cross-roads. There are red-patch soldiers at the Brick House."

He nodded wearily, turned his horse, and went limping away through the woods.

I turned to my men. "Now," said I, "McDonald will be on us, and war-parties from the Lakes. Best make ready, lads; do what you have to do, because we take the far trail before sun-up."

I called Binny to me and told him to have the packs ready for inspection before dark; and my men fell to packing up and cleaning their pieces, mending hose and shirts and moccasins, while Binny, in the storehouse, measured out rations and ammunition for all, including Indians, and called up every man in turn to fill his pack and stow there his spare hose, shirts, and moccasins.

Witch-Eyes, calm and serious, showed me her pharmacy, and I pointed out what could be carried. Then I inspected each rifle and each pack, and found all in order.

My Indians had been very busy shining up gun-barrel and knife and hatchet, all in animated conversation and aiding one another to freshen up their paint.

I supposed that Nawaa would remain in camp. Not he! For he came to me in a strange and horrid panoply, and I saw he also was painted a most ghastly and livid blue, and oiled, and his head shaven save for the shock of stiff hair and feathers which served for a scalp-lock. He wanted to take his drum and rattle, and I had no

objection as long as he carried it tied on his own pack.

The Pequot paced the fire space like a lank, nervous beast of prey, and his eyes shined like one. As for my Loups, they were excited and fiercely happy, and so were their kinsmen of the Siconnet, Shannock, and Narragansett clans—or tribes—whatever they called the loose relationship.

Toward sundown they set a painted post in the ground, kindled the fire, and chanted the chant of Ashuelot.

Suddenly the Pequot drew his hatchet and struck the post with a most horrid and unhuman cry that went echoing and shuddering away through the darkening forest. Hatchet after hatchet flashed and struck. The Shannock began to dance; my civilized schoolmates, Ghost-snake and Gadfly, singing the Loup war-song, were now dancing, also. Nawaa drummed.

My men sat watching in the firelight. Presently Witch-Eyes came and seated herself, and I lay down beside her and gazed at the dancers, chin on fist; but in my mind echoed the voice of that man who had fought with the Oneidas in the West; and ever in my ears was ringing that ominous word, "Oriskany, Oriskany, Oriskany."

There came a silence broken only by the rhythm of the drum and a dull shuffling of moccasined feet stamping the ground in unison.

Witch-Eyes flung up her head and from her throat poured the Sewenniio.* All chanted it. Then her pure young voice was lifted in the song of the Loup d'Orange:

"O sakiha O nidjanisa!
O sakihaban EN-o-kiban-en!"

And all the warriors sang. The Sewenniio, too, for it was well known among all converts as well as among Mohicans not converted:

* "Thou art master!" (Master of Life, or God.)

"Lenni-Lenape
"O sakihan 'osan!"

And so on through the endless list of relatives until, of a sudden, comes the hissing enquiry concerning the Iroquois, Atotarho, and the contemptuous answer:

*"O sakihigo kinebiko!"

The Pequot, who had first struck the war-post, was the first to snarl out his war song, all growling with †Algonquin gutturals and nasal whinings and the cat-like hiss.

Witch-Eyes whispered to me: ‡"Ka-ja-kensi-tok!" and truly he most terribly did resemble the great tawny cat of the forest in facial expression, in movement, and in voice.

When Miauhoo had finished his miauling, Cloud, the Narragansett, sang his stately and sonorous war-song; and then Niooi, the Siconnet, sang, loud and boastfully; and then the Shannock, Samoset. Last came Ghost-snake and Gadfly, and, though terribly excited, bragged but little, and sang mostly of the glories of the past.

Nawaa, who had been timing each song with his drum, now shouted for attention and pointed up through the space in the trees where our binnikill tumbled foaming down the hill.

And there, against the stars, we saw an Indian signal fire burning on a dark mountain.

The enemy were in Schoharie.

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* "He is beloved of serpents!"

† The Algonquin *C* is pronounced *sh;* the *g* is always hard; the Algonquin *N* is nasal only at the end of a syllable, which does not terminate the word. There are eighteen letters in the Algonquin alphabet but only twelve in the Iroquois, which possesses no labials.

‡ "Perhaps he *is* a cat!"

CHAPTER XXVII

Trapped!

THERE began for me presently that most terrible period in my career which I shudder to recall; and which, as long as I live, I know I shall see through a bloody mist of smoke and tears.

At sun-up on the tenth of August, McDonald's horsemen galloped into the lovely Wood of Brakabeen.

Above, on the river, we heard the Highlander's pipes skirling and saw their red jackets where they were marching up and down the road.

Everywhere the enemy had begun to overrun the Valley; every road and path in Schoharie was blocked by them. We saw smoke above Vrooman's Land, near Brakabeen, and on the Clyberg.

What to do I knew not. I had but twelve men.

Everywhere, now, we saw barns, grain barracks, and haystacks on fire. A great blanket of brown smoke hung over the heart of Schoharie; and everywhere we heard McDonald's guns on the hills and caught distant glimpses of scarlet and of the glittering of steel.

There was nothing to be done here with twelve men.

I said to Binny that we might be useful among the remoter settlements and farms whither surely the Indians would repair for scalps; and he thought so too.

We marched in file, moving along the base of the hills, but high enough to see any smoke.

About noon the Pequot, scouting ahead at some little distance, came back to tell us that there was smoke beyond the Panther-berg.

When we came out on Panther Creek we took off our packs and hid them. We had scarce accomplished this

when there came a man, running; and he had blood on his neck and clothing.

When he perceived us he came toward us, and proved to be a ranger named Will Hynds of Harper's scouts.

He had been shot; one ear hung loose; but he gave an account that he had encountered three white men, Beacraft, Warner and Allen, and they were painted like Indians, and had with them nine Praying Indians who were burning cabins along the creek and murdering all inhabitants.

Even as he spoke we heard a most horrid screaming from somewhere very near; and we all ran down the road which was full of stumps; and saw a grain field, and near it a house afire.

Then we saw Indians who were scalping a woman in the wheat and beating a man to death with the butts of their guns. As we sprang toward them, we saw a little girl run out of the burning house, and an Indian catch her and kill her with a stone.

They did not notice us until we were in the wheat and already among them.

The savage who had ripped from the woman her thick shock of glossy yellow hair stood up all streaming with blood, and the same instant was buried under the rush of my Indians; and I heard their hatchets hacking through flesh and bone.

The two who were at the man left him and tried to run into the wheat; and Binny shot one and Crow-Caw caught the other who was a "blue-eyed Indian," and held him and cut his throat so savagely that his head fell back and hung only by the hairy skin of the neck.

I saw the savage, who had murdered the child, run around the corner of the house where lay a pile of fresh cut logs.

From behind these he fired his gun at me, and his bullet cut the thrums from my right shoulder. Then he turned and started to run to the creek, but saw the Ride-out boys awaiting him, so he made for the woods; and

I drew up and shot him at some thirty yards—a "clane" shot, as Murphy has it. For, though his legs continued kicking and jerking as though muscular instinct for flight still survived, when I ran up I saw that he was shot through the brain, and so left him still a-quiver, and ran back toward the creek where my Indians were yelling fiercely like hounds around a bear.

In the alders my two Loups had caught another white man painted like an Indian and were killing him while the others shouted encouragement. As they dragged him out and flung him onto a little log bridge, from beneath the bridge rushed several Indians and dashed into the alders.

Instantly my painted pack was after them; I drew my whistle and blew three blasts on it, and Binny, Crow-Caw, and the Rideouts and I ran down the east side of the creek which was rough pasture, and from which we could overlook the alders and shoot into the swaying bushes.

At their first view of these foreign *Praying Indians an ungovernable scream of rage burst from the throat of every Algonquin.

Their hour had arrived at last. They knew it. For the first time in generations Algonquins had faced Iroquois in battle paint. And their ferocious joy knew no limit.

It was a horrible pursuit. It continued for *nine miles!* And on that relentless trail they led us through the blood and ashes of their devastation—lonely houses, isolated barns reduced to heaps of glowing coals; cattle and sheep lying dead in the fields; corpses, scalped and stripped naked—women, old men, little children, disembowelled and hanging across fences as hunters hang dead game.

I saw a watch-dog with its throat cut, and *scalped!* Near it lay a little boy, also scalped, and with his belly opened and his entrails tied around a tree!

Near to this place we caught two of the destructives.

* St. Francis Iroquois from Canada.

One of our bullets had broken the leg of one man—a white man painted like a savage. He had a white man's scalp at his girdle.

He lay in the alders and looked at us out of sick and frightened eyes while my Indians took the tether rope from a dead cow lying near. When they had greased the rope we hung this man to a swamp maple, and did not even address any word to him or notice when he begged for time to pray. As we noosed him he cried out that his name was Henry Allen and begged some word of his fate be sent to his young wife at Kingston.

I said to Binny, "Make an end."

We started on when we missed the Pequot; but he rejoined us further on with the scalp of the hanged man tied to his girdle, and the hanging rope around his body. I heard him say to the Narragansett that the rope had broken and the man was crawling about on his hands and knees in the alders when he scalped him and cut his throat through to the backbone.

God, what a nightmare was this day!—and all the horrid days and months and years to come!

And if I tell now of these nigh incredible events it is because our children and our children's children ought to know what price was paid for liberty, and so understand that this same liberty that we have left as legacy to them deserves to be respected and well watched and guarded tirelessly against every foe outside or within our boundaries who would willingly destroy it.

The Praying Indians we tracked were, evidently, becoming exhausted. They made a stand in a rocky place to ambush us where the creek road passes under a wooded hill called Pigeon Peak, I believe. Some of McDonald's riders seemed to be not far away from this spot, for we heard guns firing below us along this little solitary valley, and saw some smoke hanging in the sky. Presently Ghost-snake discovered horsemen—six or eight—drawn up on the edge of a buckwheat field ahead, where the forest touches cleared land.

I said to Binny: "We should storm yonder nest. Is that your opinion?"

He asked Crow-Caw and Ghost-snake. All seemed to be of that mind.

I said: "We take no prisoners among these child-killers. If we do so, they must hang, and that is a dirty business for gentlemen, yet must be accomplished."

The horsemen did not wait for us but fired from their saddles and spurred off across the buckwheat. However, I now perceived a white man who seemed to command the Praying Indians, and who must have joined them here, for we had not seen him up the creek.

We now took cover, creeping forward from tree to tree, firing when we saw anything stir, then reloading, and always advancing.

The destructives had begun to fire at us from the rocks; and presently Binny called to me that Cloud, the Narragansett, was bad hit and lay in the ferns as though dead.

"Get forward," I replied, "I cannot help it. Keep to your trees. When you hear my whistle break cover and run for them!"

I noticed Jeddie Rideout leaning against his tree and pressing his left shoulder with his right hand, which was very bloody. His gun lay on the ground.

When he noticed me, and before I could warn him, he stepped away from the tree, and instantly fell down when several rifles cracked from the rocks.

Then the hidden Praying Indians began to screech their terrific scalp yell, and I heard their white officer shouting to them to reload quickly and have a care lest we rush upon them.

But presently two of them came creeping down a gully through the brush to take Jeddie's scalp; and these were cunningly cut off by my Loups and the Pequot who chased them into view where all fired on them and down they went like a pair of running bear in willow scrub.

Here it was that my Shannock died; for, having taken no scalps, he desired those two above everything on earth. I did not see him leave his sheltering tree, yet so secretly he went that he had secured both scalps when we saw him spring to his feet in plain view. Then the Shannock scalp-cry shrilled through the woods from his lips; and instantly the enemy fired on him with howlings of astonishment and fury. Even then the foolhardy fellow lingered too long to defy them and mock at the hereditary enemies of his nation; and would not even notice my frantic whistling or Binny's angry shouting at him to take cover. Then all the rifles fired together from the rocks; and the Shannock fell as I sprang forward calling to all to follow.

I saw the Siconnet and my two Loups shoot down two Praying Indians and slay another with their hatchets.

The enemy were running—such as remained and the Pequot and Crow-Caw and I on their heels. But there was a tamarack swamp at the bottom of the wooded hill, and in this we lost them all save one on whom Crow-Caw fired. His was the most fatal rifle I ever heard save only Murphy's. So the Pequot took the scalp and came leaping back all dripping with slime.

For nearly an hour we hunted along that morass to discover the secret path which the Praying Indians must have known, and by which they fled. We did not find it; and I feared to linger too long. So we went back toward the rocks, and there I saw that Binny and the others had taken the *white man and had hung him. And it was a most horrid sight to see, yet if ever any man deserved so contemptible a fate, then it was this man whose body swayed and turned there against the smoke-stained sky.

We buried our dead in the buckwheat field, and made a fire there to conceal the common grave, lest any Praying Indian dig up the corpses to scalp them—as they have

* His name was Huetson.

been known to do. Then we went back nine miles for our packs.

All that afternoon we lay in the hills to watch this lonely valley where we could see a few log houses yet unburned, though their wretched owners were fled to the woods.

We heard McDonald's guns all day long, but none of his riders came our way, and no more Indians.

Nor do I now believe that this war-party of Canadian Indians and renegades with which we fought were any part of McDonald's motley force, but had followed Butler's Rangers and Indians to Stanwix, and, from there, finding it too warm to suit them, had come south to do murder in lonely places, and apprehending no interference.

We had some few scratches among us; Ghost-snake had been knifed in his left thigh; Niooi, the Siconnet, was badly bitten and bruised; and my shoulder was stiff with blood where the bullet had burned deep that sheered me of my thrums.

Witch-Eyes washed and poulticed us; made our fire and cooked supper. All day she had kept up with us, jogging along beside Nawaa, whom I had trusted to guard her and never leave her.

I did not see either of them during any fighting, yet Nawaa had a Caughnawaga scalp, and displayed it, cunningly eying me; nor would he tell where and how he took it; and Witch-Eyes did not know.

I think he found a dead destructive somewhere in the alders, and scalped the corpse; but now he was strutting about with his trophy, and presently prepared a hoop to stretch it on, very busy and contented while supper was cooking.

It was an excellent supper. Miauhoo took his bow and painted arrows and went down along a little spring brook. He was absent no more than half an hour when he came striding in loaded with two fawns, and he

blank, cruel smile of a panther made him most fearsomely to resemble that hunting beast.

All were glad of the meat, for all needed it. Even poor Jim Rideout ate, but looked solemn and had tears in his eyes; and Binny had one arm around his neck and strove to cheer him.

As there were none of their clans to mourn the Shannock and the Narragansett, I had no doubt my Loups and the Siconnet and Pequot would do so.

They did—with Nawaa's drum and rattle, and a fire—but the ceremony was neither long nor did it seem to be a fixed ritual as is the custom of the Iroquois who raise up others to replace their dead at their beautiful Condolence Ceremony.

When it was over I rose and spoke of Jeddie, and said he had been a good soldier of our Lord who understood how to reward courage and self sacrifice and who knew how to pardon human frailty as well.

Then Witch-Eyes' pure young voice began the Delaware hymn:

*"Wu-lamal-esso-halian!"

And all four Loup converts knelt down and chanted the refrain in their own Loup dialect:

†"Wu-tappe-sittuk-quissum-noo-wehtunk-puoh."

Jim Rideout wept and wept against Binny's shoulder.

Everywhere in the dusk the whippoorwill's ghostly call broke out; stars quivered dimly; there was a taint of smoke in the night air.

I set sentinels that night, to be relieved every three hours.

In the morning it rained. I took Binny and went down to the road, and saw men gathering there who had come to bury the dead and to discover what damage had been done in these remote regions.

* "O Thou who hast made me blessed."
† "—And kneeling down before Him!" (Loup d'Orange)

We told them what we knew and asked concerning the enemy's movements; and they said that McDonald was still burning and destroying and recruiting many or forcing others to take royal protection.

A lame old man came to me and said that the lonely farms westward of Cobuskill must suffer as these had unless some protection were sent.

There was in my mind no doubt of the dreadful peril to all isolated folk; and Binny thought we ought to move out that way.

So when we had eaten we started westward; and presently heard guns in the rain in the direction of Fox Creek.

We were now eight men, a witch-doctor, and a woman, and I dared not scout in that direction where all the four valleys were overrun.

All that morning and until late afternoon we marched along the hills; and about sunset saw a fire.

But when we arrived all was destroyed and an entire family, scalped, lay dead in the grass which was on fire in places where sparks from the house and barn had fallen.

Early the next day there came people from God knows where, who had seen the flames the night before but dared not budge. These we left to bury the dead, and, having eaten, took up our weary patrol once more.

All that rainy August week we were afoot among the hills, seeking out lost farms and the rough hamlets of pioneers who had ventured to trust this wilderness and who now either lay dead there or were fled from the wretched ashes of what had been their homes.

We now had made a vast circle, and were approaching the Mohawk from the south—for I was resolved to obtain news at any risk if need be.

We had come into rich and cultivated land, I remember, and saw great acreage of corn and buckwheat, but nobody in the fields, no cattle in the pastures, and what houses, stores, and mills we came to seemed deserted.

As we needed food we took what salt, corn and pork we required from the cellar kitchen of one of these deserted houses.

In another we discovered a batch of bread baked, and took each a loaf.

But it was sad to see how terror had come upon this pretty spot and with what haste the inhabitants had fled leaving everything.

From the lack of cattle and poultry I was convinced that McDonald's riders had driven away the stock and stolen the fowl, but, otherwise, had done no plundering.

I told Binny that I had a mind to scout toward Brakabeen. He thought it not too rash an attempt.

So we turned that way.

About dusk we came to a tavern where was candle light and many people moving about inside and out along the road. Also there were carts there, and oxen, and some horses.

I left my people concealed in an orchard and went on toward the tavern.

Everywhere were men, women, and children, and the men carried guns; but very soon I perceived that these people were refugees; and, indeed, were now preparing to go back to their homes.

I asked a man, who carried a little lame girl on his back, what news he had of McDonald.

"Why, damn him," says he, "he's on the run!"

"Defeated!"

Then, while the child clung to his back with her frail arms clasping his neck and her thin little legs wound around him, he told me how *the Albany Light Horse and mounted militia had galloped into Schoharie, taken prisoner the red-patch soldiers at Brick House, raised the siege of Stone House, where a few of our militia were entrenched, and how then they had struck McDonald's army at The Flockey and driven them headlong into the

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* For an account of this battle see *The Little Red Foot.*

wilderness,—renegades, Highlanders, outlaws, horsemen, Indians—the whole motley and bloody-minded force.

Nor was this all the news he had to tell; for it appeared that *Stanwix had beaten off St. Leger's army; that Arnold had been detached from the North with a body of troops to raise the siege; that St. Leger's Indians, hearing of this, had fled, and that St. Leger himself, with Sir John and Butler, had begun a most disorderly retreat.

"I had it," said he, "from a rifle scout of six, out from the Fort to look for Arnold, and the news is positive. . . . As for my little girl and me, we are going home to Torloch—are we not, little sweetheart?" he cries gaily, and kissed her pale cheek over his shoulder.

I saw an ox cart passing, and piled with feather beds and rude furniture and a clock. A woman and six children sat upon the bedding. Beside the oxen, goad in hand, walked a forest-runner in his fringes and gaudy wampum finery.

When he saw my rifle-shirt he waved a hand toward me:

"Neighbour," he called out through the rosy dusk, "if you're going to the river, have a care, for I hear that Sir John has sent officers in disguise up the Valley to raise every Tory from Oneida to Schenectady!"

"Where got you that?" I demanded, joining him and moving along beside him as he gee'd and haw'd his heavy, docile team along the rutty road.

"From one of our Valley farmers, who'd been to the Flatts. He swears that there are secret Tory meetings in lonely taverns; and that they carry it with a high hand in some villages; and further he assured me that, three days after Oriskany, he saw Walter Butler at the Flatts and recognized him though he wore no uniform but was disguised as a drover."

"Do you believe it?" I demanded.

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* For an account of this battle see *The Maid-at-Arms.*

"He took his oath on't . . . And there's a crack-brain young man, too—this moody Wally Butler—old Indian Butler's lawyer-lad—crazy as a bed-bug!—aye,—but we know him in the Valley—and how his nose is ever in the air. Why, he notices us honest folk no more than the dirt he treads on. . . . And I hear conducted bloodily at Oriskany. . . . If he truly be in the Valley, I pray God somebody will catch him and hang him for a spy."

"Do *you* believe this man is in the Mohawk Valley, disguised, to raise the country against us?" I demanded.

"If Nicholas Wint said he saw him there, *he saw him!*" replied the forest runner doggedly.

"Very well," said I; "thank you kindly and good night to you."

My little party were happy in the news I brought them. When they had eaten and had rolled them in their blankets, I told them that on the morrow I desired all excepting Binny to return to our rendezvous at Wilderhook and there await us.

To Crow-Caw I gave charge and made him responsible, warning him and the others that, though McDonald was driven out of Schoharie, and St. Leger retreating in the West, yet all these could return again, and surely would do so sooner or later.

"Until forts are built in this district," said I, "we may expect the enemy at any moment. And they will return anyway, forts or no forts. So do not consider yourselves in safety at Wilderhook or in the Wood of Brakabeen. Pass clear of taverns; trust no man; keep your rifles primed and your flint new and clean."

Then I got up and beckoned Binny; and we went across the fields to the tavern.

Here for five shillings I hired two good horses—and the landlord, being a friend to liberty, and hearing that we were off to the Flatts to trap and catch a Tory, asked no further deposit.

We drank two mugs of flip; got into our saddles;

and all that night we rode westward along the river; and, near morning, off-saddled in a hayfield and slept until the bright sunlight unsealed our eyes.

Our horses had wandered as they fed, but the field was fenced and we caught them easily.

While we were saddling, a fat man came from a house near by, and, entering the hayfield, asked us, hat in hand, and in a frightened voice, if we desired breakfast.

Now I was certain by his servile manner that he took us for some wandering raiders of the other party. And so it was; for, when he finally understood who we were and what was our errand, he led us to the top of the hill and showed us the Flatts and a large, yellow house near the river, where boats were tied to a little dock.

"There," said he with ferocious satisfaction, "is Shoemaker's House, and a famous Tory nest! We peaceful folk are near distracted with their arrogance and bragging. They come into your house and demand food and drink and pay nothing. If you refuse they take what they desire and promise you that you shall hang before snow flies. It is believed that they have arms and ammunition hid away in some barn and are waiting only for Sir John to march hither before rising and murdering us all."

The fellow was a poltroon but also it was plain enough that he had ample grounds for concern.

"Do Tories gather at yonder house every day?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. And lately there have arrived strangers from the eastward who go about openly holding meetings and exhorting all to take royal protection and arm themselves."

"Do you know Walter Butler by sight?"

"No, sir."

"Have you heard he was here?"

"I have heard so,—yes, sir. I do not know. . . . We are all near distracted—"

"Very well," said I, "take comfort then; for General Arnold is marching to Oriskany and Stanwix and should pass through this place with his brigade to-morrow if not this very day."

His servile features weakened in tremulous relief and he gazed upon us with tears of joy a-dripping down his fat and mottled face.

Then the ferocity which lurks within all cowards gleamed from his mean eyes; and I heard him muttering of spies and hanging, and that those who carried it high had better have a care.

I did not like the man and would not eat under his roof; nor would Binny; and we got into our saddles and went down the road to Shoemaker's house, now disguised as a tavern.

It seemed rash, yet we had come to take a man, and might as well await him in his own lair as elsewhere.

We tied our horses to the rail and entered carrying our guns.

"What!" said I sharply to a man in a scratch wig who said he was the landlord, "—nobody here? Well, then, damme, it is not worth the pains to ride fifty miles and carry our guns. I shall not desire to enlist in any company of Captain Butler or Sir John!" said I, angrily; "and that's flatter than your own damned Flatts!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" protested the fellow, "you do us injustice—indeed you do, gentlemen! Why, gentlemen, it is scarce seven o'clock in the morning, and the meeting is to be at eleven. *Four* hours, gentlemen, is not long to wait. We are not such early risers in the Valley as you gentlemen of—of—" He hesitated, rubbing his hands and bowing.

"—Of Schoharie," said I sulkily, "where the rebels have beaten McDonald and where there's no longer any safety for friends to Government. So spill that into your snuff box and sniff it!"

"Yes, sir," he said, "I have heard o' them doings.

Heavens, gentlemen, you are fortunate to have escaped with your lives."

We commanded breakfast—and we had a good one, too, of porridge and eggs and chocolate and all the bread we could eat.

We ordered our horses to be cared for, well rubbed down, bathed, watered, and a good feed of grain.

About nine o'clock we had them saddled again and tied to the rail. The landlord was afraid we meant to depart, and assured us that there would be a loyalist meeting at eleven, and that—although it was a secret—Captain Walter Butler would be present.

I said we would go for a stroll and return. And, when we were out of sight, I said to Binny: "I know only two ways to conduct; take this man's person or take his life."

"Yes," said Binny, "we came to take him and we ought to do it."

"Let us think it over," said I. We seated ourselves under an apple tree where we commanded a view of Shoemaker's door, and of the good folk who were early afoot to work in the fields or to drive their flocks to pasture.

By eleven o'clock some thirty men had entered the house, singly or in small groups. All wore sober citizen's dress; and none, it seemed, had the impudence and effrontery to carry arms openly. I noticed how passing farmer folk glanced fearfully and askance at them and at the house, and hurried forward the sheep or geese or cattle they were driving.

I had not yet seen Mr. Butler go in. But now it was after eleven o'clock and he may very well have been any one among those men who had entered.

"Well, Binny," said I at last. We picked up our rifles, looked to flint and priming, and, getting up from the grass, walked briskly through the orchard.

"I think," said I, "you had best remain here and hold

our horses. Get into your saddle and have your gun at cock. . . . If you hear a shot you shall know that Butler is dead. If I take him he shall mount behind you. If I come not out, then it is *I* who am taken, Binny; and when you are certain of this you shall clap spurs and ride for your life."

"Am I to turn tail if they take you?"

"Of what profit would it be to me if they take you also?"

He gave me a black and rebellious look, but I told him to obey orders; and then I took my horse's halter and my rifle and went into Shoemaker's house.

There was a great room there, and a table in the middle of it, beside which a man stood, speaking loudly and violently. I knew him instantly, though he wore a miller's dusty dress and his back was toward me.

I did not even notice what he was saying. I wasted no time but pushed my way through the company; and, before any there thought to stay my hand, or even perceived what I was about, with my left hand I took Walter Butler by the collar and gave him so sudden a jerk toward the door that his speech choked in his throat and he stumbled helplessly in the direction I drove him.

So astounded were the company that, for a moment, not one among them stirred at all, and only gaped at me in bewildered and silly fashion.

Butler was now struggling like a wildcat to get at me, though half throttled, but I had forced him to the door; and now I called Binny to shoot him if he got away or if any man left the tavern to aid him.

My prisoner now conducted like a crazed thing; and I gave his neck-cloth another hearty twist and pulled him violently toward Binny's horse.

"Get up behind," I panted, "or I'll do your crazy business for you!"

As he still fought to get free of me I twisted his neck till his legs gave way under him. The next instant I forced his arms behind him and tied them with the halter.

He seemed partly insensible from the strangling he got and I caught him and threw him bodily astride Binny's horse.

Then I turned on the men who came crowding out of the door, all furiously shouting, now; but I know not what they shouted, nor heeded it.

Binny held them, where they stood, with levelled rifle and I drove them back into the tavern.

Then I got very quickly into my saddle and beckoned Binny to follow me.

"Wait!" he cried excitedly, "there are troops on the road ahead!"

"By heaven!" said I, "they're Arnold's men! Ride to them, Binny, while I hold that tavern load of Valley Tories!"

I whirled my horse and faced the tavern door again with my rifle aimed at it.

There came a great rush and scamper in the hallway, and the pretended landlord's frantic voice: "My God, gentlemen, have a care for the back door! The garden's full of soldiers!"

The lank, lean Continentals came on with a rush, two mounted officers galloping ahead. Already the road, garden, orchard, swarmed with light infantry. An officer dismounted, ran into the tavern all alone, and presently reappeared driving landlord and guests before him.

Binny came galloping back, his prisoner safely delivered. I looked down the road; and saw bayonets glittering as far as I could see. I heard somebody say that these troops were from Fort Hunter.

The officer who had dismounted climbed back into his saddle. A sergeant marshalled the prisoners into a long file between two other files of light infantry.

"A fine bag of Tories before noon dinner," said the officer to me. "Are you the rifleman who caught Walter Butler?"

"My comrade and I," said I, saluting him and wheeling my horse.

"One moment, my brave fellow!" he called out to me—"now what the devil is all this modesty—"

But I clapped spurs to my horse, and Binny followed me, and down the river road we galloped till we were out o' sight and hearing.

Another mile we cantered on, then drew bridle and walked our slavering, snorting horses.

Binny said nothing nor seemed surprised. He was a rare man for understanding. And I did not doubt he comprehended as perfectly as though I had told him, that the unhappy man we took must presently hang; and that there could be nothing more repugnant to me than praise or advancement for so disagreeable a duty as I had been obliged to perform that cursed August day.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Hatchet and Fire

THE Northland was in a turmoil. Red days were upon us. There was no system of defence in all our country, no slightest preparation, nobody in authority.

Our only fortress, it is true, had been relieved, but the garrison remained there and it was a hundred miles away.

As for our Northern army, it had fought at Bennington and at Stillwater, and was now in daily combat with Burgoyne, along the upper Hudson. No aid for us in that direction.

In Tryon, Herkimer and nearly all his officers were dead; fragments of the Palatine Regiment, the Canajoharie, and the Caughnawaga were either disbanded or scattered into scouts or rangers, or had enlisted in the New York Line.

It was tragic news, too, that we had from the South, where His Excellency had fought so desperately at Brandywine and Germantown and had been driven out of Philadelphia into the Jerseys. No help to be expected from that direction.

Here in the Northland the full peril of Iroquois invasion now loomed high above the horizon, towering over us like a thundercloud veined with lightning.

In Schoharie the Committee of Safety knew not what to do or where to turn, for no man was to be trusted unless already tried and proven.

Messenger after messenger went galloping to Albany begging the Governor and Council of Safety there for advice and aid. Some of these couriers were stopped; some taken; some shot out of their saddles; some

staggered into Albany with war-arrows sagging from limb and body.

*Colonels Harper and Vrooman sent runner after runner from their district rangers, exposing the treachery of the situation.

The repulse of McDonald, the capture of the red-patch soldiers, the surrender of Captain Mann; even the taking of Walter Butler, scarcely mitigated the peril. For now the country swarmed with enemy scalping parties, raiders, scouts, partisan war parties, burning, plundering, murdering everywhere among the remoter farms and settlements.

Colonel Vrooman showed me a letter from the Albany Committee:

"—The trial and punishment of those inhuman wretches who have combined with a savage foe to imbrue their hands in the blood of the innocent demands a speedy attention."

But no aid was sent; and of what advantage was it to call these marauders "inhuman wretches" and "wicked parricides"? Of what avail, even, was their solemn trial of Mr. Butler before a Military Court, and their verdict that he must suffer as a spy taken within our lines; and the ghastly preparations for his execution —suspended only because he feigned illness and was believed to be dying?

As for me, the Committee ordered me to take my scout and patrol the Brakabeen district; and consequently, being sometimes in touch with the River, I got news through batteaux-men. Thus it was that I learned how the British had entered Philadelphia. And, in October, had the sad news of our disasters at Fort Clinton and Fort Montgomery, and learned how wantonly Vaughan had burned the pretty town of Kingston.

But we, in Schoharie, had no time to repine, for

* It was Colonel Harper's policy which brought into Schoharie such men as Nathan Holden. He wrote to Albany: "The people here are so confused that they do not know how to proceed. I . . . . beg your honourable body to appoint such men as are *strangers* in these parts."

scarce a week passed but my patrol discovered some new frontier atrocity of pillage and murder—some wretched cabin ablaze and the dead and mangled family in their blood—or a grist-mill afire and the miller full of arrows —or a pasture strewn with dead sheep and cattle, the rail fence burning, and the shepherd hanging across it, disembowelled.

In late October the Albany Committee sent for me. I left my scout at Wilderhook and took Binny and went. Colonels Harper and Vrooman were there, also; and we begged for aid and authority to make some defences for our district, and pointed out how hopeless was our situation and that Stanwix could not protect us.

It was neither our eloquence nor logic that secured to us something of what we so desperately desired. God interposed. For in that same hour when we were haranguing the Albany Committee, hoping against hope, even when their dull and hopeless gaze bade us despair, like an Archangel from Heaven comes galloping an express out o' the North, and staggers into the council chamber to gasp out his news:

"Burgoyne is taken!"

Well, we went back to Schoharie and began to make three forts, and with authority to turn out all the citizens, militia, exempts, and soldiers to fall to and complete the work with desperate speed.

The first fort we built was called the Middle Fort and we built it about half a mile northeast of *Middle Bridge, and enclosing the two-story stone dwelling of John Becker, which was to be made into a citadel. This was headquarters.

Five miles southwest of this fortress we built the Upper Fort in the upper end of Vrooman's Land, with barracks, block-houses, and casemates; and six miles north of the Middle Fort we constructed a fortification with nine-pound brass and iron cannon. We built it

* Middleborough.

around the stone church, and erected block-houses on the northeast and the southwest angles, and embrasures for smaller cannon. This was called the Lower Fort.

But God's bounty did not end there; for presently there marched into the Middle Fort Major Parr's battalion of Morgan's Rifles, as garrison; and I near died of joy to see my Captains Hawkes and Long, and the celebrated riflemen, Tim Murphy and David Ellerson, in the new log barracks there which smelled fresh and sweetly of every evergreen perfume in the world—pine, hemlock, spruce, and balsam.

Lord, what a reunion was that!—and my head a-humming with Schoharie ale and a most treacherous punch brewed by our Major Parr.

And—oh, God, to see our *new flag there, and how prettily it took the wind, rippling like some fair flower high in the blue!—

But I could not remain, for there came an Oneida runner with news of murder done west of Torloch; and I galloped off instantly for Wilderhook with Binny, Crow-Caw, Jimmy Rideout, and from there with my Indians who now were all mounted on good horses,—indeed, we were known as The Galloping Scout, and made out to push our hardy horses through a wilderness where even a wolf was at pains to travel.

Thirty men had gone off from Torloch to the enemy, and I knew it was they who had brought a scalping party back to that dismal district.

Up and down that dreary wilderness we hunted for their trail in vain, and I was wroth with my trackers whose affair this must be. They were hurt and disconcerted, and I obdurate and inflexible, but though we saw the bloody wreckage of their savage work, and buried the poor dead they had slaughtered, we ranged the forest in vain for any trace of their trail.

In a rage I wrote a letter to my Major, Parr, at the

* The Stars and Stripes were hoisted at Fort Stanwix for the first time.

Middle Fort, and begged him to send me Tim Murphy and Dave Ellerson to Torloch as soon as might be.

But when these woodsmen without peers arrived, they could discover no more sign than could my Loups and rangers.

"Bedad," remarked Murphy, scratching his head, "if thim rinnygades do be birruds I dunno. Divil a trail have they left for us to follow. I take it they have wings f'r to fly south in winter, and are gone along o' the crows."

When he spoke of their going "south," I noticed that Binny started and looked up at me.

After the council of war I drew him aside and asked him what thought had entered his fertile mind.

"Well," said he, "*that* is the only direction in which we have not scouted."

"Southward?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, Binny, that trail leads to Ashley; and the Half Moon militia patrol it."

"Yes, sir, but it leads to Colonel Service's, too."

I was startled as the solution of it all flashed upon me. There, on the headwaters of the Charlotte, was the residence of Colonel Service, kinsman to the great landed families of Tryon; a known royalist and a powerful one.

Why should his mansion not turn out to be the hidden rendezvous and supply station of these war parties that were harassing Schoharie?

He had a fine estate under cultivation. He had mills, shops, barracks, cattle, stores.

Because he lived in a remote region was no reason why he was not both willing and able to do us a harm.

Colonel Service was a gentleman,—a near relative of Sir John. But when I thought that this man might have afforded aid and encouragement to the outlaws and savages who were burning and slaying throughout the entire frontier, my anger and disgust knew no bounds;

and then and there I determined to discover what this Tory gentleman was about.

I dared not leave Torloch to the mercy of the enemy. I left my mounted scout there, and gave the command to Crow-Caw.

Then I took his horse and Rideout's, and gave them to Ellerson and Murphy: and, with Binny, we four set out for the Charlotte River.

Such missions are repugnant to me—as indeed was all this bloody business—the taking of Walter Butler; the chase of painted child-killers,—all smelled most horridly of the hangman's noose in my nostrils.

But it had to be done. Who would do it if I did not? Yet—oh, for one more real battle, with its honest cannon thundering out death, and a wall of red-coats and bayonets breaking furiously through the smoke!—

We passed so near Ashley that we could see men ploughing on distant hills; and my heart was almost breaking to know my Nancy was there. Safe, of course, not only because of royal protection, but because no friend to liberty raised a rifle or a hatchet against any woman or any peaceful folk who differed from us in the colour of their politics.

All that day we rode; and at night slept in a sugar house—but whose I know not.

About noon on the next day, being then near the headwaters of the Schoharie, Murphy discovered a trail so fresh that we tied our horses and cocked our rifles, fearful that already we were trapped.

There were moccasin tracks and tracks made by white men's boots. And very soon we found a stinking fire where this party had camped; and we noticed the heads of trout and also deer entrails lying about, and the whole place was but a filthy latrine.

But what made it certain that here we had stumbled upon the trail of the Torloch murderers was a woman's cotton cap which Ellerson discovered, all stiff and blackened with dry blood, and split by a hatchet. God forgive

them—there were gray hairs still sticking to the cotton cloth.

We took horse immediately and rode out into the woods where under giant walnuts and oaks and maples no underbrush grew.

I think we had proceeded about a mile, and keeping the Charlotte in view, when Murphy discovered the war party filing along on the other side of the stream and headed in the direction of Colonel Service's estate.

Instantly we dismounted and I made Binny hold our bridles, while Murphy, Ellerson, and I ran down to the water.

"Murphy," I said, "it's too far for a shot."

"I dunno," said he, coolly; "I sphit on the bullet whin I loaded th'ould gun—"

His rifle went up as he spoke, hung absolutely motionless for a second, then, through the cloudy flash of it I saw the leader of the distant file fling up both hands, beat the air, fall forward and roll down the bank into the shallow water.

Like a herd of terrified deer the others sprang into the bushes and were gone in an instant.

We ran down and thrashed our way across the shallow stream to where the dead man lay in a little setback under the bank, his head under the reddening water.

Murphy drew him out by the legs:

"Clane," said he to Ellerson, pointing to the bullet hole which drilled his head.

Ellerson, pulling out wet papers from the dead man's pocket, handed them over to me. In them I read the wretched story. Here was his commission in Butler's Rangers—a captain's. His name was *Eversley Smith; his orders were to destroy Torloch, then to return to Colonel Service's and there find a company of Tories which Service had equipped and provisioned, and which he, Smith, was to bring to Butler's Rangers as recruits.

* There is some doubt about his given name.

I put the wet papers into my pouch, nodded to Murphy and Ellerson, turned away from the dead man and waded back to where Binny stood with our horses.

It was not likely that the war party we had fired on would now go to Service's but somebody on the farm might have heard the distant shot. There was no time to lose; we put our horses to a dead run, and soon came out into a meadow where a herd of fat beef cattle grazed.

There was a cart-road through this meadow. Murphy unbarred the gate. Then on a swift gallop we rode over the low crest of the hill and saw the broad acres of this remote estate stretching away to the unbroken forest.

The house, surrounded by maples, stood near a little brook, and sheep grazed around it.

Again I made Binny hold our horses, and went into the front yard, and took hold of the door knob, but the door was bolted.

Ellerson started to go around the house; and I was still trying to force the front door when we heard Murphy call us.

Instantly we ran around to the back door, and saw Colonel Service standing there. He had been mending a harrow and had an axe in his hand.

I heard Ellerson tell him what was our errand with him. At the same moment Mrs. Service came out on the back porch; and from the kitchen door poured out the hot fragrance of newly baked bread.

I said: "We are here to arrest you, Colonel Service."

At that, swift as lightning, he aimed a blow with his axe at Murphy, then at Ellerson, who dropped his gun; then he aimed his axe at me, springing at me with the swiftness of a panther.

How we contrived to dodge that murderous attack I scarcely know. Murphy jumped up onto the back porch; and there Mrs. Service caught his arm in her trembling hands and begged him to do no harm to her husband, who now stood glaring at us like a savage creature at bay and not knowing on which of us to spring.

"Shoot the damned rogue!" shouted Ellerson, whipping out his knife but giving ground before the glittering axe.

I did not see how we were to take this maddened man unwounded; and so held my rifle ready for a shot at his legs.

Then I saw Murphy gently put away the supplicating arms of that wretched wife, and pat her on the shoulder.

"Don't kill him!" she shrieked.

"Mother," he said gravely, "he never shall sleep with you again."

At that instant Service leaped at Murphy; and the rifle flame leaped to meet him; and he fell headlong through the powder cloud as though blasted by God's lightning.

We found forty loaves of bread in the house, and equipment for forty men.

This was the dreadful kind of duty to which the military authorities had devoted me. I grew sick with it.

And that winter which presently came upon us in Schoharie was the very starkest, blackest, and most awful winter that ever I encountered in all my life.

In our camp of clay-daubed logs at Wilderhook we lay through those hellish and bitter months of ice and snow, ready at any moment to take to our snow-shoes when some lurking scalping party crept down among the hills and fell upon the cabin of a settler.

That winter in those white and awful solitudes has left, I think, a scar upon my mind that never wholly can be effaced.

I would not allow Witch-Eyes to remain at Wilderhook but made Nawaa carry her to the Middle Fort, where were other women and snug huts and barracks; and where, too, was Captain Hawkes.

It was there, in dead of winter, that Witch-Eyes and Captain Hawkes were married by the Chaplain of a New York Regiment; and this was the only gleam of sunshine that lighted up those dismal days.

For all attended that wedding, which was the prettiest ever I saw; and I think I never beheld any bride more lovely than this slender maid of the Loup d'Orange.

The ladies at the fort had made for her a trousseau; and many gifts were brought up from Albany by sledge.

Lord, that was a gay festivity amid the thickly falling snow which so covered the fort that it seemed only a vast mound of virgin snow over which a flag was flapping.

But that was the only light hearted moment we, in Schoharie, knew that dreadful winter. As for me, brooding at Wilderhook, my heart was heavy with the tragic news of Valley Forge, and how our army starved and froze there in their rags and tatters, and the snow all stained where their bleeding, naked feet had passed.

And when I remembered the British, all warm and snug and feeding fat in Philadelphia, I could scarce endure the thought.

Now, in the early spring of that most dreary year of all my life, there did happen a calamity so strange that I never yet have learned the explanation.

I have already mentioned, and with some natural repugnance, how Binny and I did take Walter Butler at Shoemaker's; of which, to conceal its real purpose, a sort of tavern had been made with pretended accommodation for man and beast.

I have mentioned how the infantry of Colonel Weston's Regiment had taken charge of the prisoner. Further, I did not state,—the subject being a disagreeable one to me,—only that I had ridden away with Binny in a manner which was, perhaps, abrupt.

Well, it has become necessary to revert to that most unpleasant event; and this is what happened:

Colonel Weston's troops, scouring the Flatts, discovered fourteen of Butler's Rangers hidden in barns, and fourteen Iroquois Indians, and made prisoners of them all, and carried them, and Mr. Butler, to General Arnold.

At his headquarters, and before a military tribunal,

Mr. Butler was tried. Colonel Willet officiated as Judge Advocate.

Mr. Butler's defence was that he had come to the Flatts under a flag of truce. But that could not be, for he was a British officer in disguise, and none saw any flag, and moreover how could he come into our lines with his Rangers and Indians and on a mission to the royalists with purpose of engaging them to fight against us?

The verdict was according to facts: Mr. Butler was adjudged a spy, and condemned to suffer accordingly.

But this prisoner was a gentleman of birth and breeding and known to many in New York Province.

Many officers in our army had known him when he was a law student in Albany. Alas, they had not known him since.

Well, his plight aroused sympathy; and, how it was contrived I know not, but a reprieve was granted Mr. Butler, and he was sent to Albany under heavy guard, and there placed in the military prison under sentence of death. And there he fell ill—or feigned illness—I know not which.

Well, in the spring came our young *Marquis gaily to the Northland—brave, generous, chivalrous—and sentimental.

To him the awful plight of Walter Butler instantly appealed, and he went to see this condemned young man in his military prison.

Here, and apparently dying, he found a handsome, pale young gentleman of his *own* caste—an officer of birth and breeding.

I know not whether our gallant, romantic, but sentimental young Marquis thought death upon the gallows preferable to death in prison. At any rate he said that Walter Butler was dying; and he had him sent to a private residence and there nursed back to health . . . And so successfully that presently Mr. Butler either

* Lafayette, ordered to take over a proposed Canadian expedition from the Northern Department. It was part of a secret plan to ruin Washington.

*bribed or drugged the sentry, and whisked himself away into the woods like a very snake.

And when he was safe at Oswego once more he wrote a most damnable †letter to General Schuyler, with most bloody threats which I, for one, understood; and, moreover, was perfectly certain he was determined to carry out.

That was a blow to me who knew more, perhaps, of this young man than did many among our people. And as for myself, why I was perfectly convinced that my noddle would presently have no hair on it if Mr. Butler ever had his way with me. God! What a dreadful mistake was made by our brave young Marquis when he opened those prison doors to Walter Butler!

However, it was Lafayette who investigated the Cherry Valley situation, which Colonel Campbell exposed to him at Johnstown; and he did order a fort to be erected there and ordered Alden's Regiment to occupy it; and also it is due to him that our Schoharie forts were properly planned and garrisoned.

Well, I respect and love our Marquis. But he undid what I had accomplished which was the most utterly repugnant business that ever I engaged in.

And now, presently, was destined to come upon our people that dreadful and bloody vengeance of Walter Butler.

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* Official accounts differ.
† The letter still exists.

CHAPTER XXIX

Vengeance

I THINK it was in June that one of M'Kean's scouts from the Sacandaga came in with an account of a war-party out that way and with a list of names of those they had taken—four between Hunter and Fonda's Bush, or Broadalbin, as the Scotch call it, five in Broadalbin,—John Putnam, Joe Scott, a Mr. Rice, a Mr. Salisbury, and another man named Bowman. And at Fish House they took Godfrey Shew, and the three boys, Jacob, Steve, and *Jack.

But before we could move to cut off this war-party, the Praying Indians murdered a mother and thirteen children, in Schoharie; and a "blue-eyed Indian" impaled upon his bayonet a baby in its cradle, which the Indians had spared, and, as he held it up writhing in its death agonies: "Look," says he, "here's another that shall never grow to be a rebel."

Scarcely had we saddled to gallop to this distant farm when an Oneida runner brings news that Brant and his Mohawks were burning †Springfield.

When at last we got there with M'Kean's scout and a small body of mounted militia, nothing except ashes remained of the little town excepting only ‡Croghan's new house.

There was nothing to do here. The place stank of putrefying carcasses—it being a hot May and the sun very fierce—and long before we came to that desolated spot we could hear the immense humming of millions and millions of green flies whirling above that place of death.

* Escaped, but taken again by a mixed war-party under a renegade named Parker, and by him murdered. Parker, in turn, was taken, tried, and executed.

† About twelve miles west of Cherry Valley.

‡ Geo. Croghan, a valuable deputy under Sir William Johnson, who had a house in almost every settlement in the Indian country.

It seemed hopeless for us to do anything with the small scout at our command. Besides, the mounted militia went home.

On our return I met a Lieutenant Borst, who seemed vastly uneasy concerning Cobuskill where the rich alluvial flats had all been planted; but no defences had been made for the village, and there was only a small company of militia to defend the village.

I told him he ought to go to the Schoharie Fort and ask for some regulars.

I told Binny that I thought we ought to remain near by for a while, and he agreed; so I took him, and Crow-Caw and Jimmy Rideout to George Warner's house, which stood on a knoll in an orchard; and my Indians I sent to scout up the creek under leadership of the Ghost-snake, and I particularly cautioned them to have every care because it was known that the Mohawks had been at Unadilla with Brant and Walter Butler, and God only knew whither they had gone now or from what direction they would strike us next.

Binny and Jimmy were on guard on the edge of the little hill; Crow-Caw sat astride the chimney on the roof of Warner's house.

I was sitting on the sill of the barn mending a beechen bowl with a plug, for Mrs. Shafer, a near neighbour; and I was a-thinking of my Nancy, and thankful that she was sheltered by those who enjoyed royal protection, and so seemed safe from torch and hatchet.

Presently Crow-Caw calls out to me: "Cap'n! Cap'n! Them two Loups o' yourn is runnin' out o' the woods almighty fast!—headin' this way."

I dropped bowl and plug and hastened out into the orchard; and saw Ghost-snake and Gadfly running through the clover field below; and saw the latter stop to pull an arrow from his left arm where two more dangled and flopped.

"Jimmy!" I shouted, "bring up our horses! Binny! Call Crow-Caw. Something has happened to our Indians!"

The two Loups came bounding up the hill; and the naked body of Gadfly was all smeared with blood.

"What happened?" I asked him; "I heard no shots fired."

"No," he said calmly, "they used arrows. It was a very bad ambuscade."

"How many?"

Ghost-snake said: "Miauhoo fell with nine arrows in his body. Niooi lies like a dead bird in the brook, so thick are the feathered arrows in him. Three arrows struck the tree where I stood; I counted seven more in the tree where Gadfly crouched. Nathan, there were no less than forty war-bows bent against us."

"Forty!"

"More," said Gadfly with a shrug.

"What Indians did this thing?" I demanded.

"The arrows are Mohawk."

"You saw nobody?"

"Not a soul."

It was needless to ask these brave men why they had, in that silent, feathered storm of death, fled and left their dead to the Canienga scalping knives. The miracle was that they escaped at all.

I bade both Indians mount and alarm the village, and saw them gallop away down hill.

Crow-Caw came loping from the house in long, ungainly strides, and called gleefully to us that a company of regulars from the Middle Fort had just marched into the village, and the militia were running to them with their guns.

We three men stood there gazing intently at the woods where the brook flows out through the clover. We saw nothing, nor heard a shot. But it sickened me to realize that already hostile Indians were scalping our dead within the shadows of those green and sunlit shades.

We heard the thud of hoofs behind us; Ghost-snake and Gadfly cantered up through the orchard, saying that forty regulars under Captain Patrick were close behind,

and that Captain Brown was collecting what militia were in the village.

Almost immediately we saw the Continentals marching through the orchard, and about fifteen militia following them.

"What's the trouble here?" called out Captain Patrick to me.

I told him. Captain Brown came up and listened.

"Well," said Patrick with an oath, "we'll drive those red devils from the creek if they be no more numerous than that."

"Wait a moment, sir," said I, as he turned to order his men forward; and, to Ghost-snake: "Are there a hundred Indians in those woods?"

"More," said the Loup, quietly.

Captain Patrick retorted impatiently that it made no difference.

Captain Brown, an officer of sense and modesty, ventured to suggest that we should find out what we were marching into before the enemy ambuscaded us.

Captain Patrick gave him an insolent look: "Oh," says he, "some would call your caution by another name, sir."

Captain Brown flushed hotly: "Very well, sir; be pleased to give your orders."

I said: "Their use of arrows, and their remaining under cover may indicate a small war-party. But I trust to the sagacity of my Loups, and they have not yet led me astray."

Patrick, somewhat impressed, hesitated. Then he proposed to move forward and develop the strength of this hidden enemy.

"Sir," said I, "that is what Captain Brown proposed, and I agree. Only, sir, if we dislodge but a few Indians we should be chary of following them too ardently, for it is thus that ambuscades are laid."

Patrick looked at me and at Brown and laughed in a manner not too polite.

"Sir," said I angrily; "my mounted men will develop the situation before your advance! Rangers! Trot out! March!"

I paid no attention to what he bawled after me, for already we were cantering our horses down the slope and out through the clover.

The woods, being composed of gigantic first-growth white pines, harboured no undergrowth here except along the brook.

As we trotted our horses into the woods, far ahead we saw some score dark, naked shapes dodge out of the brook willows and scatter ahead throughout the woods.

Instantly we spurred forward. They gave us a shot or two, then disappeared over a wooded knoll; but when we arrived upon its crest, there were our Indians again, way beyond us in the woods, still retreating, yet at no great speed.

"An ambuscade," said I to Binny.

"I never saw a plainer one," said he.

"That is easy for a child to perceive," remarked Ghost-snake coldly.

As we spoke, the retreating Indians halted and stood watching us. Two of them lay down and fired at us, but the range was too far; and we knew they also knew it.

There came a great thrashing below us, where Captain Patrick's men were marching through the willows.

We set our horses in motion to keep pace with him.

The Indians, still retreating, fired an occasional shot. About half a mile we advanced in this fashion, when there came a rattling fire from no fewer than three score rifles, and twigs fell and bark jumped from nearby trees.

At that I spurred down the creek and called out to Captain Patrick:

"Best fall back to the village, sir, where we can make a decent stand. This is like to be an ambuscade, for already it shows every sign!"

But he shouted back angrily that he meant to drive

forward, and I heard him calling across the creek to Captain Brown to get his militia along faster.

I do not believe we had advanced thirty yards before three hundred rifles belched flame at us; and I saw men falling, both regulars and militia.

I instantly dismounted my five men and made Gadfly lead our horses into a little hollow, and stand there with them.

Our regulars had taken to trees and were firing from the bed of the stream. The militia lay down and took shelter in the Indian grass where a partly cleared pasture bordered the woods.

The noise of the enemy's fire became excessive. A Continental lieutenant and five men crept up to where we stood firing. He seemed very nervous, and said that he had had sufficient experience in battle to realize that there could be no fewer than five hundred men firing upon us.

The increasing noise, the storm of bullets pouring through the woods, the sharp outcry of wounded men, the yelling of the savages, always drawing nearer and closer along our flanks, combined to make a most horrid din in the sombre forest light.

Now we began to see our enemies. There were white men a-plenty and the forest swarmed with painted savages.

Three of these discovered our horses, and had almost got among them when Gadfly fired and wounded one, and Ghost-snake and Binny shot two more; and my Loups scalped them. They were Schoharie Mohawks and Oquagos by their paint and lock.

Captain Patrick, very pale, came from the creek with three of his men. He said to me: "This is a bad business. I think the entire Mohawk nation is in front of us."

I said: "If you do not order an instant retreat we shall not get clear of this trap, sir."

I think he meant to do so, but suddenly saw Seneca Indians in the willows, and shouted a warning to the soldiers below.

We all fired; their volley came shrieking through the forest in our very faces.

Captain Patrick went down like a felled ox; all three of his men were down; I saw the regulars falling in the smoke below; saw Senecas take two prisoners with most horrid cries.

Captain Brown with what was left of his militia and the regulars came to the knoll where we were posted.

He was cool and composed, and had made his men carry with them three of his command who had been wounded—Leonard King, and the Shafer brothers. The regulars also bore their wounded with them, some five or six poor wretches in their blood.

"Sir," said I to Captain Brown, "I have six horses below, and your wounded need them."

He thanked me, ordered the wounded carried thither, then, in a calm voice, gave his commands for the withdrawal of our force.

Lieutenant Borst, Nick and George Warner, Jack Shafer, Larry Lawyer, and George Freemire fought with the rear-guard under my command.

Captain Brown took the regulars and the wounded and guarded our flanks as well as might be.

I heard a grim old sergeant of regulars saying that he had counted forty of the enemy dead and a dozen flopping on the ground like headless chickens.

We had a hard time of it. I sent my two Loups back to warn the village that we were beaten and that all should fly to the Middle Fort without delay.

We got our wounded out of the woods, up to the hill by George Warner's house, and from there to the highway and under escort for the Schoharie Fort.

For an hour we held the destructives there,—they not caring to charge upon us over open country, but blazing at us from the edge of the woods to keep us employed until they could flank us through the village.

Captain Brown came to me where I stood firing from behind an apple tree:

"Call your men," said he, "the game is ended, Mr. Holden, and the town must burn."

I gave the order, but two militiamen, *Jack Freemire and Marty Fester, ran into Warner's house, and seemed distracted, nor could I induce them to budge.

We retreated, fighting from tree to tree, shooting at every form we saw crawling or dodging about in front of us.

When we were not far away I saw that Warner's house was on fire.

A few moments later John Shafer called out that his house and barns also were burning, and so were Billy Snyder's and Larry Lawyer's. Then, in a few moments, it became plain to all that the entire village was afire.

From the road up which we retreated we could count, at the same moment, twenty blazing buildings. A great tossing sea of fire raged where Cobuskill had been.

Before we overtook our wounded, the enemy left us and went back to drive off the cattle and destroy everything they could not take with them.

That night it rained. And never, I think, had the world seemed to me so dismal a place to live in as that night I lay among my five tired men in our hut at Wilderhook and listened to the June rain falling through darkness.

And, lying there, I knew in my dreary mind that Walter Butler had struck at us his first relentless blow; and that without God's miracle this noble frontier was devoted to ultimate destruction.

In the morning we learned that the destructives had ravaged Torloch.

Later that week we heard of the murder of Lieutenant Wormood, of the Palatine Regiment, ambuscaded by Mohawks. Also it was said that both †Brant and Butler were at Cobuskill in person. I do not know.

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* Their burned bodies were discovered later in the cellar and identified by tobacco box and knee-buckles.

† Brant certainly was present.

Then, like a clap o' thunder to distract and stun us, came the awful news of Wyoming. So horrid was the butchery by the "blue-eyed Indians" that the account seemed nigh incredible. Yet I, for one, did nothing doubt the tales of horror, for, again, the name of Butler was coupled with this fearful business, as was that of *Brant.

Of officers alone we lost there three colonels, a lieutenant-colonel, a major, ten captains, six lieutenants, and two ensigns, and, out of four hundred men, regulars and militia, scarce sixty survived. In the swamp called *The Shades of Death,* the fugitive women and children perished; others were murdered or driven as prisoners to Canada. Fire completed the ruin of the beautiful Valley of Wyoming,—that strange and ominous place of unearthly beauty which seemed doomed to endless and bloody strife. For, from that hour, began the warfare around it which for years continued in full and sanguine tide. Surely that lovely valley seemed accursed, where, from its earliest settlement, it had known only violence and strife; and now, finally, had gone up to the stars in flame.

Yet, even amid its ashes, a most stubborn war was to continue; and, as late as the final peace, troops were required in that paradise of nature to prevent its inhabitants from exterminating one another to the last living soul.

As for our district, the region, now, was infested by hostile savages and painted Tories, and not only were the remoter settlements being continually destroyed, but the enemy came into the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys, and burned, plundered, and murdered almost at will.

In July Andrus-town vanished in a roar of flame.

In August Brant fell upon Edmeston, then on the German Flatts, destroying the finest and most fertile district in the Northland. As far as the eye could reach

* Unjustly. Brant was not present at the Wyoming massacre.

the valley was afire,—a spectacle of melancholy grandeur just as the first faint glimmering of dawn appeared.

Ten miles of burning houses, barns, wheat fields, hay fields—this is what the sun rose on over the valley of the Mohawk, which was but a vast and rolling ocean of flame and smoke.

My God, what could we do? And it helped very little when my scout of six galloped out of the Middle Fort with the Pennsylvania line regiment, and Morgan's rifles, to burn Unadilla and Oquaga. The destructives vanished like mist at sunrise, into thin air, and all we accomplished was to ruin some stinking Indian towns which were the cleaner for the burning, and would be easily rebuilt elsewhere.

Not one soul did we see, and lost only one man ambushed by some young, ambitious scalp-hunter, no doubt.

And, riding wearily again toward the Wilderhook: "That was not well considered," said the Ghost-snake to me, "for it has done no service to us but only inflames the Iroquois to a hatred more determined. We, in Schoharie, shall suffer the more for this useless expedition."

"I think it very likely," said I. "There are a hundred miles and more between Stanwix and the Schoharie Forts. What is Fort Herkimer? A brick house palisaded. What is Fort Dayton? Nothing more considerable. And the Johnstown Fort? A stone jail fortified. And the Sacandaga Block House? A lonely post on Mayfield Creek with only a devastated region to guard. As for troops, we have none to take and keep the field. Scouts and rangers are the only folk afoot in all this district. And I deem it strange that no troops are sent because this is the granary that must feed our army or it starves."

That summer in Schoharie was a horror of sudden alarms, swift marches, solitary combats among wild rocks and brawling streams where the enemy vanished like serpents in the clefts and the tracking was in vain.

Why these poor settlers clung to their lonely patches of corn and their log huts when the Painted Death stalked the forests, God only knows. They were dying under knife and hatchet by hundreds and hundreds. Yet the survivors always came back from the forts after a bloody foray, to take up their wretched life again, rebuild, replant,—grim folk who buried their dead in silence; dogged folk who were not to be driven from the rude roof and handful of earth which they had made theirs by endless hardship, and which was their all on earth.

With the first frosts came days and days of thick and chilly mists, and the air stung face and hands, yet it was still early in November, and beech and oak still kept their red and brown and golden foliage.

Colonel Clyde and Colonel Campbell had come to the Schoharie forts early that summer, greatly concerned for their pretty town of Cherry Valley; and I was glad to see Colonel Alden's Regiment march thither to garrison their stockade; because I remembered that both these gentlemen had served at Oriskany; and that what their troops did there to the Iroquois and Walter Butler's Rangers *neither the Iroquois nor Walter Butler ever would forget!*

I ventured to say as much to Colonel Clyde at the Fort; and he replied very seriously that he knew it, and knew how implacable a hatred Walter Butler bore him; and that Cherry Valley was marked for vengeance unless a sufficient force were retained there to overawe such banditti.

On the twelfth of November, it being a foggy day, I left my two Indians in camp with Rideout, and rode with Binny toward Cherry Valley.

Never shall I forget the galloper we met whose person and horse streamed with the blood of a dead child that lay across the pommel of his saddle, and who waved two bloody hands at us, screaming:

"Butler's in the Valley! Turn out your men! For God's sake turn out!"

We wheeled our horses and galloped alongside this crazed old man, striving for information.

"All dead!" he shouted hoarsely, "everybody's dead in Cherry Valley!—everything's afire there! For Christ's sake turn out your men!"

There was nothing to learn from this poor madman, so we rode for the Fort.

They had the news already; and everywhere I saw mounted *militia galloping, and the Continentals mustering; and a great throng of frightened people, and some frantic, who had husbands and sons, sisters and mothers at Cherry Valley.

I saw my Captain Long outside the fort. He told me what had happened.

"It was Walter Butler," said he. "Alden let himself be surprised. He's dead and his Major taken, and I know not how many Continentals dead. Butler let loose his Indians on the women and children. A man came in an hour since who saw a score lying naked and scalped. They spared nobody—not even babes at the breast—nor old men too feeble to walk. . . . The Senecas and the 'blue-eyed Indians' were the worst. Butler uncaged his wild beasts. . . . There's nothing left of Cherry Valley."

* Two hundred went immediately to Cherry Valley. They buried the dead.

CHAPTER XXX

The Holocaust

THAT spring I applied for a transfer from the State Rangers to my old company in Morgan's Rifles—so sick had I become of the incessant, bloody, and sordid duty of a scout in this doomed region.

No notice was taken of my application, but Binny Kemper received his commission as Lieutenant in the Rangers; I had mine as Major in the same corps; Jim Rideout was made an Ensign; and Crow-Caw alone was sent to Morgan's as Sergeant in Captain Long's company.

As for our men, they existed on paper only; but our Governor Clinton promised me permission and every assistance in raising a mounted corps of three hundred State Rangers when the time arrived for such an effort.

But in the meanwhile Crow-Caw went away to the Middle Fort; we were called to Albany where General Clinton was recruiting and forming the division destined for an expedition into the Indian Country by way of Otsego and Tioga; and which General Sullivan was to command.

Here, for many months, we were attached to the staff of General Hand,—the merry hearted officer in command of the light troops.

I admit we fattened at his table; and, unlike Clinton who was parsimonious, the punch bowl ever flowed in General Hand's quarters.

But now, here is a strange thing; for, wearied and nauseated and exhausted as we had been with our scout service in Schoharie, presently we missed the excitement of it and the freedom—even, perhaps, the hardships.

And, as for me, always in my breast persisted the uneasy thoughts that Albany was very far away from Ashley Court. Yet, my Nancy, enjoying royal protection, seemed safe enough in person.

Naturally I expected to be sent into the Indian country when General Clinton's wing of the army moved to Otsego; and was annoyed when regiment after regiment marched, and no orders came for Binny or for me.

This alarmed me when Jimmy Rideout was attached to the Light Corps and left for Otsego at an hour's notice; and Binny and I discussed it with great misgivings, for there had been talk of officers to be detailed to a camp of instruction in the Highlands where His Excellency desired a recruitment for a rifle battalion, and that strange premonition which sometimes assails me now began to possess me.

And, as usual, it happened; and presently Binny and I found ourselves aboard a sloop and under full sail for West Point.

There was an encampment some miles from the great fortress called Continental Village. Never had I inhabited so dull a spot on the earth's surface; never have I had to do with yokels so stupid.

A rifle corps in our army is presupposed to comprehend the élite of our soldiery. Lord! They sent me details from every regiment, and from the militia. Not one man out of fifty ever would make a rifleman.

Also, by temperament, I am not fitted to be a schoolmaster of any description. Good material already made, I flatter myself I can use in not too contemptible a fashion. But I do not know how to make a soldier out of a clodhopper, nor a rifleman out of a soldier.

All that long, long summer and autumn and early winter did Binny and I toil and sweat to accomplish the business entrusted to us; and there were officers at the Fortress who could not understand why a tow-cloth shirt and moccasins did not make the wearer a rifleman.

Such as it was we had now made a battalion. God

knows they were neither foresters nor sharpshooters; and, as for any Indian lore, they possessed none. Not one man in twenty was qualified for such a corps as Morgan's or even for my Rangers.

Nevertheless they were designated as light troops and sharpshooters, and I burned all the powder allowed me to make them resemble what they were intended to be.

In the meanwhile I fretted, and so did Binny. My Indians pined in their barracks.

I wrote to my Nancy, but expected no reply, and had none, either.

But what now began to annoy and presently alarm us was the sinister news from Schoharie, which, during the summer, had not seemed too desperate, although enemy scalping parties were constantly taking toll.

But Walter Butler, after Cherry Valley, seemed in a manner somewhat glutted with blood—like a lithe, fierce beast that feeds too heavy, and lies up in some shaggy and twilit forest to slowly lick its blood-wet claws and, in a sort of waking-doze, await the coming of its appetite again.

So Butler, heavy with slaughter, loitering from Niagara to Montreal; and everywhere Sir John's emissaries out in the West a-stirring up Huron and Wyandotte with belts and presents—and the scalp-bounty raised from twenty to thirty dollars—but for prime goods only, and must be crown-scalps.

Well, every day now my uneasiness increased, and I was impatient to a degree that I could scarcely bear this exile from Schoharie. It is very certain that, what one defends one comes to love; and that I had come to love the beautiful valley of the Schoharie-kill. Maybe, in part, it was because my Nancy lived there.

But now the almost daily news by sloop, by express, by runner and courier, grew worse and worse; and I was becoming dreadfully convinced that the blood-slaked beast of the Northland was growing gaunt and restless once more.

There came first to our Fortress the news of Minnisink. Such horrors! And the folly of our men trooping like sheep into the inevitable ambuscade! It was like our Cobuskill fight, only bloodier.

It was somewhat a relief to learn that those monsters of cruelty, Lieutenant Hare and Sergeant Newbury of Butler's Regiment, had been caught, tried and hanged. Yet I realized to what a fury these executions would arouse Walter Butler. I was in no error.

Yet, for a little while, the devastation spread through the Indian country by General Sullivan's army heartened us; and when we heard how he had laid waste the splendid Iroquois Confederacy and had driven Butler at Chemung and at Newtown, we dared hope for better days.

Yet, for all this punishment, scarce a day passed but the frontier suffered; and we heard how Balston was attacked, and of the fight at the Mayfield Block House.

However, from the South came news of Wayne's victory at Stony Point, but also we learned that Fairfield, Norwalk, and New Haven had been laid in ashes. What most rejoiced us was to hear how Paul Jones had taken the *Serapis,*—for to strike Britain upon the sea and carry it to victory fired our imaginations as nothing had, so far, in all this war for liberty.

But now all our news became of different and darker colour; Tryon and Schoharie again were swarming with enemy scalping parties; everywhere grain fields were devastated, cattle, sheep, hogs were slaughtered or driven off; and the winter, already upon the Northland, threatened the entire region with starvation.

I had expected to march my command to Schoharie before the snow fell. Instead of that we were ordered to do duty at the Fortress. In that vast citadel we continued all winter long in a strange and maddening idleness; and the only comfort I knew was my never ending faith in His Excellency that he knew where every man was needed and had so placed him for all-wise and proper

ends. But I often wished that I were with His Excellency at Morristown and freezing, rather than to eat my heart out here and stare all day at the frozen river between its crags and ice-bound hills.

But mostly my misgivings concerned the coming spring, and Walter Butler. For what our army had accomplished in the Indian country crippled, principally, those Indians who remained at home. True, the destruction of their harvests embarrassed their warriors and the British, too, but the privation, I knew, must render them only the more deadly to us.

And so it was. For, with the opening of the spring, an avalanche of red-coats, renegades, outlaws, rangers, and savages was let loose throughout the Northland.

In April Harper's scouts were ambushed and he taken in Schoharie. Then, suddenly, Sir John appeared in the Mohawk Valley and set it ablaze from Caughnawaga to the Nose, and his Indians and Greens began their murderous destruction from Johnstown to Tribes Hill. Here fell that harmless and respected gentleman of eighty, Douw Fonda, his aged head cloven to the neck-cloth by an Indian hatchet. They stripped Amasa Stevens naked, disembowelled him under the eyes of his wife, and hung his body over his own fence. They murdered and scalped Captain Hansen in his bed. They slew the youthful Putnam brothers almost on the sill of the young girls they had come a-courting. They locked Peggy Wymple in her own house and set it afire, but it was said she managed to escape.

They murdered some of the Fishers, the Gaults, the Plateaus—all names familiar to me. Mrs. Romeyn and Penelope Grant escaped, it was said. Everything was burned except the parsonage and Douw Fonda's fine mansion, which were plundered and wrecked.

Scarcely had we had that dreadful news than reports arrived of the destruction of Torloch—what was left of it—and that Schoharie was ablaze again, Canajoharie burned, Vrooman's Land destroyed with horrible atrocities

by "blue-eyed Indians" led by one of the Beacrafts and by that bloody Indian dog, Sethen, who murdered Mrs. Vrooman and her little daughter, and who completed thirty-five scalp-notches on his hatchet handle that day.

Scarce had we begun to understand the true purport of this dreadful calamity than, like a thunderbolt, came the news that Sir John had again struck Schoharie and was assailing the Upper, Middle and Lower Forts with regulars, outlaws and Indians; and that the forts were now buried in a blaze and smoke from their own cannon and were holding out.

Runner after runner came with news as the action progressed. Ghost-snake and Gadfly were greatly excited, their sister, Witch-Eyes, being there. We heard of the cowardice of Major Woolsey at the Middle Fort, and of the bravery of Tim Murphy who drove back the white flag three times and swore that none should be hoisted while he lived.

But all the Schoharie valley was now but one gigantic conflagration, or so it was reported, and Binny and I, who knew Walter Butler, had no longer any hope.

One runner who came in told me he saw one hundred and fifty buildings afire at the same time, and that more than eighty thousand bushels of wheat had been burned in the Schoharie settlement alone.

"My God," said he, "I can not see where General Washington is to get another cupful of flour to feed our Continentals. And as for cattle and hogs and sheep, some lie dead all over the land and the rest are on their way to Canada."

This would be a dreadful loss to our army. Nothing could have struck us a deadlier blow. And it was a fatal one to Schoharie where the wretched people now had nothing left in the world except the almost valueless Continental paper money; and it took seventy dollars of this to buy a cup of flip.

A gleam of relief came to us when we learned that Witch-Eyes and Captain Hawkes were safe, and now in

Albany; and that the three forts withstood the storm. Also I learned that Crow-Caw was safe.

Never, never had our cause been at so low an ebb. Another black winter in the Highlands was before us. And on the very first day of the new and threatening year, the Pennsylvania Line mutinied. God! What a dismal prospect was our own!

As for the enemy, they never left the frontier for a single moment. All winter long their scalping parties were out. Spring brought bloodier forays. Then Currytown was burned to ashes; and here Bob M'Kean, that great scout, fell; and here Colonel Willet drove the destructives back into the dreadful wilderness that had belched them forth.

Now, the alarming news of this disastrous spring and early summer had made upon me a new and terrible impression, because there had been an increasing number of cases of the murder of British subjects by British Indians.

That these people were loyal to the Crown, proven friends to Government, and enjoying royal protection, seemed to have made no difference to their murderers. Such cases as those of Janet M'Crea, of Mr. Gault of Cayadutta, and of others too tedious to mention, very greatly perturbed me when I thought of my Nancy at Ashley, and how men, women, and children all around her who also had taken royal protection, had not been spared in the fury of Mr. Butler's Indians and his more savage outlaws.

One day when I had been thinking of this most disturbing business, and had determined to resign my commission and go to Schoharie as a volunteer rather than remain any longer in this Fortress on the Hudson, I received my orders by a courier from Albany, and could scarce contain myself with joy to know that at last I was destined again for Schoharie, and there empowered to raise a corps of mounted militia and State Rangers against the certain information that Walter Butler was once more menacing the Valley with torch and hatchet.

CHAPTER XXXI

Warned!

EVEN before we left West Point, a messenger came from Schoharie with an account that the District Committee of safety had raised two hundred men with arms and horses for my corps; and these would meet me on my way north by the northern route out of the Delaware country.

So we rode into Schoharie by way of the Delaware country, and passed by the place where Colonel Hathorn and his Warwick Regiment had made their gallant but tragic stand on Halfway Brook.

That Minnisink ambuscade and battle was a most barbarous affair; and it never had been fought at all had our dashing Count Pulaski remained there with his fine cavalry, as he desired, and not been ordered south. However, His Excellency knew best. I do not doubt it.

We passed by the rocks where their brave regimental surgeon was dressing the hurts of twenty poor wounded men when the Senecas overwhelmed and butchered and scalped them all.

Their putrid bones were still lying scattered there in every direction,—in fact, the whole ghastly place was alive and rustling with rats and mice, and all littered over with broken guns and bayonets, mouldy clothing, fragments of camp equipment and broken canteens; and, moreover, even then, everywhere we noticed the fresh dung of wolves that still haunted that silent domain of death.

We took the northern road to Schoharie. Also I meant to ride through Ashley, having a mind to say a

few polite but warning words to Sir Ashley. We had heard this gentleman was now at The Court, and passed for a neutral, indifferent to the strife that raged around him in that distracted district. But we all knew he had taken King's protection, and remained unmolested by Walter Butler's men; and few doubted where his grain and his fat cattle went, and that these ruffianly hordes lurking along our borders were nourished on Sir Ashley's provisions and furnished there with information—perhaps with ammunition, too.

Yet, though Pulaski's cavalry watched Sir Ashley and, indeed, visited him twice, and made him remove his road-fences; and though our scouts loitered often in the vicinity, no positive evidence, so far, had been obtained that Sir Ashley used his immunity to any villainous purpose, or that his grain and cattle fattened Butler's wolves and Hiokatoo's assassins.

On a fine August morning, as we were riding through maple woods, my Indians, who were ahead, came galloping back to say that we were in touch with the Schoharie mounted rangers.

Very soon we discovered their videttes posted on hillocks among the maple trees; and soon came to a fine meadow of Indian grass near a pretty binnikill in which two hundred good horses grazed while their riders lay about or bathed or fished or cooked them a snack by a score or more of camp fires.

I think I never in all my life was so happy. Many of these honest folk I had come to know and to esteem during my sojourn among them in Schoharie. Among many of them I had fought, shared their anxiety, their grief, aided them to bury their dead, followed beside them the red trail of murder, aided them to track the destroyers of their families, their kinsmen, their homes.

They were, mostly, rough, honest, kindly folk, nothing versed in the arts, refinements, and civilization of the wider world, but were men of great simplicity and unshakable courage. It was not irresolution or cowardice

that lost them battles; it was ignorance of what to do in a distracted situation where, if they marched, they left their families unprotected; and if they neither ploughed, sowed, nor reaped, they and theirs must starve.

These men were not like my Hudson Valley, Westchester, and Jersey yokels, who had little real knowledge of the forest and scarce any at all of hostile Indians and their subtle and ferocious cunning. No. These men of Schoharie were trackers, trappers, forest-runners, hunters of bear and panther and wolf. These were pioneers who felled forests to grow what would keep them from starving. Every mouthful they ate they must first plant and care for. Their meat was venison; their clothing and their couches were the pelts and skins of beasts they slew.

I rode into the meadow and dismounted; and soon was shaking hands with many men whom I did not know were still alive, and some whom I supposed were dead, and others I remembered from many a scout and foray and alarm from the Mohawk to Torloch and from Cobuskill to the Foxes Creek.

As for discipline and formation, they had the wild kind I understood and needed, and the only kind suitable or even possible for a corps of district rangers.

They had elected their own officers, but these same officers now came modestly to me, quite willing to be approved or replaced by others of my choice.

As I desired always that Binny should ride with me, and wished to have my two Indians, also, near my person, I appointed Binny senior captain on the battalion staff, and gave him a little bugle-horn to ride behind him, Johnnie West, a boy of fourteen, orphaned at Tribes Hill where all his kith and kin perished when Sir John struck the Valley.

There being no reason for haste, we camped that night in this pretty meadow, well guarded by mounted sentinels, and, in the morning, took the road to Ashley.

When on that August morning I rode with my command of mounted rangers into Schoharie, all around us we saw tokens of the terror which brooded over all these valleys which were the granaries upon which our armies depended for their daily bread.

Even in these remoter valleys every skipple of grain that was sown, reaped and milled—nay, every loaf of bread baked to feed our ragged soldiery—was spattered with our people's blood.

Every day, every month, year after year, our valley farmers had died here with hoe, rake, scythe in hand, that our Continental Line might eat.

Ambushed Indians and renegades watched them at sowing time and reaping; and shot them in their fields as they swung their scythes through rye and wheat. Farmers had dropped dead here at the harrow and the plough; here they fell writhing under bullet and hatchet, amid their potatoes, with hoe in hand, and were scalped where they lay, often still alive, and were opened and drawn over their own fences like gralloched deer.

Yet, by God's grace given them to endure, these farmers of the Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys had never given over, but had braved the horror of the Painted Death so that our soldiery perished not of famine.

That is how, through these long and bitter valley years, our yeomen toiled to plant and reap the grain of the Northland, facing far worse than death in every hour of every day to save the ancient liberties of Englishmen.

Now, as we mounted riflemen rode through this sad Schoharie, with the chill river in flood, green and cloudy, thundering through windy reaches that stretched between meadow and hill and black pine forests, everywhere we saw the early harvest being reaped and gathered, and new ploughing already begun.

And in every field, upon a fence or a stump, or a rock, stood a tall rifleman upright in his buckskins, ever on watch, searching everywhere with restless eyes lest

unawares the Painted Death strike from the fringing thickets or the forest or the hills above.

I saw men, who had no guard to protect them, dauntlessly ploughing, with long rifles strapped across their bent backs—a fearful risk—for death came like lightning, with no other warning save the whip-lash crack that sped it.

I saw women young and old at work in the fields; women on bullock-guard with musket and rifle, or standing sentinel for their men.

All noticed us. Some lifted a hesitating hand in grim salute, or tragic adieu as they saw that we rode on. From stark log cabins little half-naked children called shrilly to us or beckoned us with thin arms. Hounds bayed us; now and then some woman's quavering voice entreated us, then ended in a sob or dry, distorted laugh.

At larger houses were stout stockades of peeled pickets; and every brick or stone farm seemed fashioned into a kind of fort to which those who could escape might repair in an alarm. And some handsome frame houses, too, were palisaded all about for protection—but musketry and fire-arrows made these but a poor refuge, and only brick or stone might be of any real service in desperate hours of need.

Lord! how content was I to be in the saddle once again, a good nag between my knees, a good rifle across my back, a goodly company at my heels, and a wild sky, a roaring river, and the purple hills of Schoharie our only and vast environment.

I rode well ahead of my column with my dear Binny at my elbow and his bugle-horn behind him on a shaggy, quick-stepping nag.

Then came my column of fours, the first and rear rank of each troop riding with rifles resting on thigh, the others with guns strapped across their backs.

Such men! I turned in my saddle again and again to look back at them; and they were the colour of a herd of deer, with the raccoon tails all a-bobbing from their caps and the wind winnowing their buckskin fringes.

*"Pull Foot" Vrooman led the first troop, riding a fine dun horse amid flying mane and thrums. Joe Becker was lieutenant, John Hutt and Jack Enders sergeants.

Behind this troop I could see "Schoharie Jack" Snyder riding his superb roan—as fine a captain as ever I saw for mounted infantry or for cavalry either.

Everywhere behind me came trampling and dancing the horses carrying the bone and sinew of the district—all old Schoharie names—Wymple, Fisher, Truax, Switz, Glen, Vrooman, Mattice, Feek, Hager, Becker!— And if there were many there whose kinsmen served with the enemy, there were more, still, whose kin lay dead in the fields and forests which they had died defending.

I know not why these folk of the Northland seemed nearer than mine own people where I was born. Yet I felt for them a kinship stronger than any tie that ever I had known which binds men's hearts together.

They were rough, they were crude, slow-minded when perplexed, slow to affection, slower to take offence, not given to words nor to schemes, nor smart in bargains, nor avid of gain by clever dealing with lesser minds.

And as I looked upon these men of whom simplicity was the common characteristic, I thought of the tricksters I had known elsewhere, and how shrewdness was everywhere admired, and how covetous of gain were these,—†money their god!—and the other god they worshipped an iron visaged idol without eyes, enthroned on living hearts all palpitating with Fear!

As I rode on I remembered the monstrous selfishness of those regiments that had left us at Cambridge the moment their time was up—left us in the face of that caged and raging British army ready to burst its bars and tear us into shreds.

And I recollected with a shudder where the traitor Arnold was born; and what neighbouring people had attempted to betray our cause wholesale, out of local

* Murdered a year later by Indians and outlaws.
† Washington's own despairing words at Cambridge.

enmity to New York. And what vile and sordid motives moved others still, to intrigue against the purest patriot who ever breathed—Philip Schuyler—that knightly soul above reproach!

Well, as our wise and gallant General Green replied to His shocked Excellency; "There are no demi-gods anywhere, and the masses are only human." But, somehow, it seemed to me that in these northern wilds the dross had been burned and torn and tried out of the great and bleeding masses of these slow-minded folk, and only remained their courage, humanity, and primitive simplicity.

We were now riding into the Ashley manor, and the first fences appeared; and beyond, hill on hill, the golden grain country rolled away along the cold and windy river between black, unbroken barriers of the forest.

In pastures sheep grazed. Yonder were Sir Ashley's herds of fat, black-red beef-cattle; here a dairy herd, black with the broad white belt.

Wagons and men were scattered over meadows where the earlier harvests were being gathered.

Great fields of tall plumed corn spread away into blue distances; acres of buckwheat patched the vivid hue of these rich flats.

And now I saw the stone chimneys of Ashley Court, and the maples, and velvet lawns and flowers and silvery gravel roads winding like brooks amid the foliage.

By the white swing-gate I halted with upflung hand to check my riders; and our little bugle-horn blew the halt, prettily and to admiration.

At that I saw the front door of the house flung open, and two gentlemen and a lady step out upon the door-step and stand as though astonished.

My heart beat so hard that, for a moment, I could not utter a word; for there stood my Nancy looking straight at me across the velvet lawn; and there stood her father beside her, resting upon his polished walking stick.

As for the other gentleman, who greatly resembled

him, I knew that he must be his brother and uncle to my Nancy, Sir Ashley Montague.

It was with him that I had business.

When I found my voice I said in a low tone: "Come, Binny." And, to the little bugle-horn, "Johnny, follow Captain Kemper and carry yourself like a soldier."

I walked my horse through the gate which a trooper held wide for us, and proceeded slowly up the gravel road to the door-step where those three stood motionless, regarding us.

My cap with the raccoon tail I removed and bowed very low in my saddle to my Nancy; then saluted Mr. Justice Montague; then Sir Ashley. These last two noticed my salutation in the slightest and most insolent manner; my Nancy curtsied, slowly recovered, and gazed upon me with pale composure.

"Sir Ashley Montague?" I asked politely.

"Yes, sir. Who are you?" he demanded bluntly.

"Permit me, sir: I am Major Holden, of the District Mounted Rangers."

"Well, Major Holden," said he in a disagreeable voice, "what is your business at Ashley Court?"

No man ever had spoken so offensively to me. I felt the swift blood heat my features; waited to control my voice:

"Sir Ashley," I said, "my business is with you."

"Very well, sir," said he, haughtily, "you may despatch it."

Again I waited for full self control. Then I said very civilly: "My errand here is a friendly one. Lately, on this harassed frontier, certain incidents have occurred which give me cause for serious reflexion. And, because of certain apprehensions entertained by me, I have ridden this way in order to impart to you what so gravely concerns us both."

He made me a sarcastic bow and said he was vastly obliged to me. But I mastered my temper.

"This is what troubles me, Sir Ashley, and should

trouble any man of sense and discretion: the Indians employed by Captain Butler to desolate this region no longer seem to make distinction between us, whom they call rebels, and loyalists who have taken royal protection.

"Always, since serving as allies to Great Britain, they have betrayed a sullen, uncertain, and treacherous disposition,—as though their desire was for scalps and plunder only, and any white man would serve their purpose—even their own British allies if safe opportunity permitted the outrage.

"Sir, this was known to be a menace to Sir John's army at Stanwix, where more than one wounded or errant British officer and soldier fell a secret victim to the hatchets of their own ferocious allies.

"It was known at Saratoga, where Jane McCrea was murdered.

"When Sir John burned Caughnawaga, the Indians slew inoffensive people who were well known to be under royal protection and friends to King George. This also has happened in other Tryon districts, and in Schoharie. In other and plainer words, sir, your red allies are not always to be trusted. And it is this that you should understand, if you are not already aware of it."

Sir Ashley favoured me with a contemptuous stare:

"Is that your business with me?" he asked.

"That is what brought me here," said I.

"To attempt to sow seeds of suspicion in my mind against British officers, British troops, and British allies?"

"If you choose to misconstrue this warning which ordinary humanity urged me to offer you."

"I am vastly obliged," he sneered, "and need not detain you for any further advice which is neither sought nor welcome to me or mine—"

"Stop!" I said sharply. "Sir! You are a fatuous and stupid fool, and with neither manners, nor mind."

"What!" he cried. How dare—"

"Be silent!" said I contemptuously. Then I dis-

mounted, bowed to Mr. Justice Montague, who gazed at me in silent rage, and went to my Nancy, cap in hand.

"Mistress Montague," said I, "contempt and resentment never yet have proven or disproven any point in question. I rode hither because I am deeply concerned for your safety, and for that of your honoured parent.

"I hope you may prevail upon him to remove from this place until all this bloody struggle has ended. There is no safety for anybody in Schoharie any longer. Even if Mr. Butler now should desire to restrain his Indians and outlaws he could not do so. Their one blind, blood-maddened instinct is to kill.

"If you believe me, and if you desire escort and protection, I will offer it under our flag, or, if you prefer, I will send you under a flag to any point—Oswego, Niagara, Buck Island, Montreal—anywhere you may elect to go. Pray command me, Miss Montague, who am your very humble servant, come here only to be of service to you and yours this day."

Very slowly she lifted her proud little head; thanked me in a steady voice and kind. Her pale, forced smile was breaking my heart.

"It is a matter to be gravely considered," she said, "but for my father and Sir Ashley to decide . . . It was kind and friendly of you, Nathan, to think of us and have concern for our safety. But you were ever as kind as you are honourable."

She held out her hand to me. Sir Ashley took her by the arm; and I set him aside without ceremony and laid my lips to my Nancy's hand.

I then bowed to Mr. Justice Montague, turned sternly on Sir Ashley, but held my wrath and tongue—for here was an ass so arrogant and stubborn that never have I seen the like in all my life. But it advanced us nothing to tell him so, nor was it seemly to rebuke him who was older, nor decent for me who had two hundred armed men at his gate.

I therefore made him a bow; looked into the blue and

tragic eyes of her I loved, then got upon my horse, bowed again to all, pulled on my cap, and set my horse to a canter.

"Riflemen," I cried, "be ready for the command. By column of fours, march!"

Clear in the August air floated the notes of the bugle; came a dusty trampling of shod hoofs, rattle and creak and clink of equipment and accoutrement.

Thus we marched out of Ashley Court—and I so sick at heart that I no longer knew whether or not the sun was shining in the sky.

We had ridden as far as the first fence, the gate of which had been removed, and were out of sight of the house, and perhaps a mile from it, when, from a lumber path on our right, rides forth a negro man in scarlet laced coat and white wig tied under his chin. As soon as I clapt eyes on this strange figure I knew him to be one of Mr. Justice Montague's Virginia postillions. He held up a letter when he discovered me. I motioned Binny to continue on with the column, turned my mount into the brush-field pasture, where the negro had drawn bridle, and, riding up to him, took the letter from his hand. Then, backing my horse a few paces, I broke the seal, opened the letter, and read the hasty scrawl:

"Nathan—

I have that to tell you which I had meant to write long since, but could not compose my mind to it. And this is what I have to say Nathan; you shall come no more to Ashley. And this is the reason: Mr. Butler hath asked of my father my hand in marriage; and my father did consent.

So eagerly and stubbornly set upon this alliance are both my father and my uncle Ashley, that, taken by surprise, overwhelmed by what they urge, I have found no voice—not one word to utter in protest or even in astonishment.

I have recently, but only in a vague way, surmised that Mr. Butler's frequent and secret visits to Ashley Court were partly to pay his court to me; yet I considered it nothing pressing—not even quite serious, nor could I guess how cordially my father would embrace the opportunity of uniting a Virginia Royalist's family of quality with the landed gentry of New York whose quality and political principals coincide with our own.

That, Nathan, is what has happened! My father sees in this match a new tie to bind two great colonies to our King's cause; a firm pillar of strength for all loyalists to cling to in this distracted region. I have no inclination for Mr. Butler—scarce understand so strange and swift a suit and so desperately ardent a suitor. Often he frightens me.

That I am never destined to marry you is certain; and, I know it full well; and, since that dreadful day at Lexington, have nourished false hopes.

So, if I can do this thing to please my father and refuse to do it,—if by this marriage I can bring to my father any gleam of happiness or comfort, who hath lost in his only son, all joy and hope forever,—and if I selfishly refuse,—then am I indeed without honour, without love, without obediance, without gratitude.

Therefore, Nathan, you shall come no more to Ashley Court.

I have my way to go; you have yours; and our paths run in opposite directions.

Adieu! My brother loved you. His sister is not likely to forget you who have ever proven so gallant, brave, and kind.

Come no more. You will forget. It is that way with men. And it is better, even for her who might desire to be remembered, that forgetfulness should sooth and finally heal a memory that hath proved unkind.

NANCY."

In my purse of buckskin I had a gold guinea. I drew it out and gave it to the black.

"There's for you," said I. "So say to your mistress that I have read her letter, and that I thank her, and wish her joy. . . . And that there is no further answer. . . . No further thing to say to her—ever to say to her—as long as I shall live on earth."

I sat in my saddle staring at him—saw him take off his hat to me—saw him wheel his horse and gallop away, hat in hand.

Then with a kind of raging death in my very soul I swung my horse and spurred after my rifle men, running my horse as though I had gone stark mad.

CHAPTER XXXII

Desolation

AS my command galloped under the cross-roads gibbet where I had been stopped that windy night by Jack Mount, I looked up at the chains. The bare bones still dangled there.

One of our men called out that those were *Huetson's bones; and it may have been so, but such things ever sicken me and I gazed elsewhere while my dismal thoughts shifted for an instant to Nathan Hale and poor young André. Then, horror at what my Nancy had done, conspired with gloomy fears for Ashley Court to render me both silent, morose, and murderously minded. And I prayed hard that Walter Butler be delivered into my hands.

Along the windy and green-roaring river we rode, and into the Foxes Creek Valley; and there out across cleared fields where, beyond the rolling country, I saw log huts and cultivated land fenced with rail-fences or with root-fences, or, along the road, with dry-walls of stones. But there was not a soul to be seen about.

As my company of horses advanced at a walk, I presently perceived an old man driving some gaunt cattle into a clover meadow by the roadside, and saw him turn about to put up the bars.

I drew bridle and lifted my right arm high to signal a halt; then, cantering forward and leaning from my saddle:

"Old man," said I, "this valley seems deserted of man save for you. Where are the settlers in this harvest hour?"

* Colonel Huetson, a Tory leader, hung as a spy.

He peered up at me out of the bluish-dim eyes of age:

"All dead or gone off," he quavered in a cracked voice, "—all dead or gone off to the enemy—and the yellow grain head-high under fair skies, and the corn ten feet to the tassels' top!"

"Gone off to the enemy?" I repeated harshly.

"Yes, my fine young man, all gone these two weeks—all gone off—clean gone, sir . . . And some with the Canada soldiers to Niagara, and some with the Castle Indians to Oswego, and others, God save us all, to join Sir John and Walter Butler, and come again upon us with fury o' fire and hatchet—"

His voice quavered so that I could scarce understand his trembling speech. I looked down into his wrinkled face and he looked blindly at me through the film of age and tears.

"Sir," said he, "I was sergeant of Foot at Louisburg under Sir John Pepperall."

"Sergeant," I said very soberly, "you should not remain here alone so far from any block-house or fort or any place of refuge. Mr. Butler's Indians make no difference now between King's people and those of my complexion."

"Sir," said he, "our army must eat."

"What!" said I quickly, "is there then anybody in this damned valley who dare remain a friend to liberty?"

"Yes, sir," he said; "Mistress Mary hath her own way here—"

"Who!" I demanded.

"Our Mistress *Mary Haggidorn."

"Is that brave maiden here?"

"Sir, she will not budge. And, being here, and mistress of her acres, and with but me, a poor black, and a child remaining—my little grandchild, sir—his parents dead at Cherry Valley—'well,' says she, 'there be four of

* When the craven major at the Middle Fort hid in the cellar, Mary took a spontoon from a sergeant and stepped forward, saying: "We need soldiers, not majors, so here be I, and Sir John may do his worst!"

us to reap and plough where a hundred hands were too few by half. So,' says she—having called us to the barracks by the farm bell—'under God we shall do God's work here in Schoharie, so that *our army shall endure and Liberty die not in this bleeding land of ours.*'"

"Did *she* say that?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. We four are doing what we can in this the vineyard of the Lord—a young girl, a child, an old man, and a poor negro slave who, having no liberty, loves it the more, perhaps, and stands by us here to endure with composure the fate God sends."

Emotion choked my speech—nor could I have discovered any word to say to him expressive of my respect.

I leaned from my saddle and gave him my hand—clasped his, drew up and gave him from my saddle the *officer's* salute which honour seemed to stun him.

I turned to my men: "Riflemen! Be ready for the command! By column of fours, *at salute*—march!"

The old Louisburg sergeant stood there with trembling hand touching his ragged hat; as my mounted men rode slowly by him saluting with the rifle.

And behind me I heard Binny say to his men: "Give him the Wyandotte yelp!"

"Yes, cheer him, men," I added.

At that the yipping scalp yell split the air and my riders tossed up their rifles, cheering the aged soldier as they rode away toward the distant Wood of Brakabeen.

At Brakabeen hamlet, near the river, we dismounted.

"Men," said I, "get you a piece from your haversacks and eat, and lead your horses into the pasture across the lane and there picket with peg and rope and halter; but you shall not off-saddle, and the picket-guard shall remain mounted, and eat a piece so, and the videttes shall advance to each of those rocky knolls and there stand vigilantly upon their guard."

Being but foot, mounted for the time at hazard, we had no real trumpet nor any cavalry equipment nor ac-

coutrement, nor yet any real knowledge of a horse-troop, but conducted as seemed best at any given moment.

I rode into the hamlet of Brakabeen, one of my men pulling wide the unpainted swing gate, and looked about me.

No smoke came from the houses; I saw no face at any window; all was still and seemed deserted. Nothing stirred in the sunshine save scarlet maple-leaves drifting earthward.

I put my horse into motion and slowly rode through this sad, grey place—out around the empty grain barracks and the deserted barns—and came to a crest of rising land fresh ploughed, and looked out upon the fields below.

It had been from this settlement that the red-patch soldiers had come. Now they had gone to the enemy in a body, leaving their houses empty and harvests standing. It seemed strange, because we had forgiven these people, —even taking no vengeance on Captain Mann but placing him only in safe keeping in Albany. Why should they so suddenly go off to the enemy who had been content to remain here unmolested by us?

Binny, who had come up beside me, gave me a strange look when I said this.

"Major," said he, "we forced them to tear up their royal protections."

"We did not ask them to enlist," said I, gloomily.

"No; but without King's protection, *what would happen to them if Walter Butler entered the Valley?*"

"I understand: You think the flight of these people indicates their knowledge of some such approaching attack."

"Otherwise, why would they go?"

This troubled me infinitely. Deep in thought I walked down toward a house where the door stood open.

"That seems strange," remarked Binny; "all other doors are locked."

He stepped across the threshold; disappeared. Presently he came to the door and said there was a wounded man inside who wished to speak to me.

So I went in and there saw a young man in bed, who had been eating a dish of soupaan. I remembered him. His name was Dirk Bouck. He had been a red-patch soldier; but had very willingly torn the scarlet emblem from hat and collar and had fought on our side at Cobuskill and at Torloch.

"Bouck," said I, "what is the matter?"

"Major," says he, "my neighbours have done me a harm; and I am shot in both legs and can not walk, but am mending, God be thanked. Mary Haggidorn brings me food every evening in her cart, and hath cleaned and poulticed my wounds, and made for me a pair of crutches. So," says he, "I shall soon be up and about and fit to fire a rifle from the Middle Fort."

"Bouck," said I, "you should not remain here. Nor should Mary Haggidorn, nor that old man, and his little grandson, and the black, because the going away of your Tory neighbours means that they expect Butler. And after my horsemen leave this place, no friend to liberty should tarry here."

"Yes, sir," he said coolly, "they would not spare us. . . . Lately I was witness of their cruelty. Renegades and Senecas were the murderers. . . . I was out beyond Torloch, and all alone—three weeks since, it was, come Sabbath.

"Major, I heard voices, and children crying; and I hid. . . . They were a Seneca war-party, and some blue-eyed Indians—some forty or more. They had made three men prisoners, a woman, and two little boys of four or five years. A painted savage had them by their hands and as he strode along the children ran beside him, crying. . . . That was the trouble, sir. Indians do not like children who cry. . . . The *executioner* of the war-party, whose face was painted black, took both little boys by the hand and dropped behind while the war-party

went on. The woman began to scream . . . Sir, I could not endure that . . . But the executioner had been too swift for me." . . .

"Both children?" I asked with a shudder.

"Both, sir . . . He had both scalps when I fired."

"You *fired?*"

"Yes, sir," he said simply.

"And then?"

"He went down, Major."

"And you?"

"I pulled foot."

"My God, I should think so. You have more courage than have I, Dirk Bouck."

"Oh, no, sir . . . No white man could have endured that mother's shrieks and held his hand."

"How did you get away?"

"I ran."

"Did they chase you?"

"Major," he said with a faint grimace, "I reckoned afterward how far they followed me, and it was more than *sixteen miles."

After a silence: "Dirk," said I, "you shall presently recover, God speeding you, and shall then ride a saddle with my rangers. If you have no horse I will find one for you. Meanwhile you must go to the Fort."

Here Binny whispered in my ear. I looked at Bouck:

"Is Mary Haggidorn your sweetheart?"

"Yes, sir."

"You must persuade her to go to the Fort."

"She will not."

"Dirk?"

"Sir?"

"You have shown yourself a rare man. Show yourself a rarer one and *make* her go!"

"How, sir?"

"Why, damme, marry her!"

* Ellerson once was chased twenty-five miles, and escaped.

He seemed startled at so bold a course, and said she was rich and he very poor, and must first prosper.

But I was becoming very angry at these slow minds: "Binny," said I, "take six men and a sergeant, and ride to Mary Haggidorn's, and there place her under arrest and those with her. Set her in her cart; pack up everything; collect all stock; and make a journey to the Middle Fort. For by heaven," said I, "there shall presently be a wedding there, and Dirk Bouck knows whose. And if in that hour he does not learn how to care for a wife, he never will learn, but fall a prey to her and her besom!"

Binny went out, laughing. Bouck seemed scared, but laughed a little, also.

"Into that cart you go," said I, "with all your goods, and your future wife."

He gave me a nice smile, but fell a-blushing, and I know not whether from fright or pleasure.

But this I know, that what I ordered was carried out that very evening; and those two brave young people, under arrest, and with her three dependants, and all her stock and their joint property, were taken to the Middle Fort under a galloping escort of rangers.

And thither went Binny and I; and did persuade Molly Haggidorn where her instant duty lay.

I heard Binny, who sometimes talked plain, telling her it was her duty to marry and breed children for the Republic as soon as might be—which the girl took in good part, and laughed and said the event was with God and Dirk Bouck.

They were merry at that wedding—the chaplain of a New York regiment officiating; and all the officers gave a punch; and there was sixteen gallons of wine from Albany, and all the flip and kill-devil that the garrison could drink.

And they danced the Gander-Hop! Lord, shall I ever forget that night at the Middle Fort, and all those riflemen of Morgan's capering a reel with the Schoharie girls that came to the dance from miles around. . . .

And I, with death in my heart for love of Nancy Montague!

How strange—nay, how merciful is it that folk can make so merry under the very visage of Death himself!

And that very night, one of our advanced and lonely sentinels by the river was butchered and scalped on his post, and his head cut off and placed upon a pointed stick which had been painted red.

And I wished to God it had been *my* head, and that my tortured heart had done with agony for ever.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Alarm!

DURING the latter harvests I broke up my command and set separate parties to reaping and threshing and garnering the buckwheat and corn on farms abandoned.

But always one man was detailed to hold the horses which always waited saddled; and these fatigue parties were ever in touch with one another and with me by signal or relay or runner.

Thus, my men could assure not only their own crops, but also those from deserted farms which the needs of our poor army demanded.

And all the while, and every week—nay, almost every day—thicker came rumours that Walter Butler was moving on the Valley. Some would have it that green uniforms had been seen near the Sacandaga, others that Iroquois had appeared west of the Flatts; and still others that the Mohawks were known to be scouting between Johnstown and Fonda's Bush along the Kennyetto westward of old *Henry Stoner's house of logs.

One October afternoon I rode to the Lower Fort with Binny and Ghost-snake; and there we saw a courier-du-bois who had that instant arrived from Tribes Hill with an account that a man living across the river,—a known loyalist enjoying British protection,—had been slain and scalped by a party consisting of twenty St. Francis Indians, ten Oquagas, fifty Senecas, all nearly naked and in their paint—and three painted white men.

He said he had first carried the news to the Middle Fort, and that the riflemen had immediately departed for

* Killed and scalped, but repeatedly avenged by his celebrated son, Nick Stoner, one of the most formidable of real frontier heroes.

Tribes Hill with a body of Tryon military and some Oneidas.

When I heard this I went into the Stone Church, which was used in this fortification as the citadel, and there I wrote this letter:

"The Lower Fort
"Schoharie,
"September 16th, 1781

"Sir Ashley Montague,

"Sir:

"In spite of your opinion to the contrary, it is my duty to inform you that what is known as Royal Protection no longer can be counted upon as certain to afford a shelter to those who enjoy it.

"I have already and personally, endeavoured to make you comprehend this, and with no success.

"This day a courier has arrived at this military post with exact information concerning the murder of a Mr. Gilbert Johnson who lived across the river from Tribes Hill and who was a known loyalist and long suspected by our party of too much zeal in the royal cause.

"Canadian and Seneca Indians and several Tories in Indian dress and paint accomplished this affair. Mr. Johnson was butchered and scalped while entertaining several of his murderers at breakfast. His house was robbed and burned.

"Several other inhabitants of the neighbourhood were also barbarously slain by this party, and great damage done to stock and crops.

"The destructives are supposed to have struck northward.

"Now, sir, is it not the part of prudence that you remove yourself, your relatives and dependants, to some safer situation until tranquility in this district is somewhat restored?

"Sir, I do not wish to offer you any suggestion in any manner coloured by a threat; but I have invited you to

remove your person and your guests; and you have not chosen to do so; and therefore I permit myself to observe that, unless you presently do so of your proper accord, I shall see that you are removed by force, whether you like it or not.

"I give you two weeks to comply with a request which, while still tolerably civil, is none the less a military order.

"I am, sir, etc: etc:

"NATHAN HOLDEN, Major of Rangers."

This letter I despatched by Ghost-snake to Ashley Court; the Indian departed at a gallop; and Binny and I rode slowly back to the Valley where our linked chain of camps lay stretched along the alluvial bottom lands of the Schoharie and Foxes Creek.

From my headquarters in a deserted red-patch house, I sent copies of that letter to the district Council of Safety, to the Albany Committee; to military headquarters in Albany, and to the Commandant of the Schoharie Forts.

If what I had threatened to do at Ashley Court exceeded my military powers, then let others in authority do it; for I meant to, if they did not.

The Ghost-snake was gone over night and returned the next afternoon.

Very gravely he came into the house where I was making a list of bulk and weight of fodder and grain so far harvested, and delivered to me a letter:

"Mr. Holden,

"Sir:

"Brevity is what your impudent message merits. If you and your self-styled soldiers and renegade Indians molest a peaceable citizen of this district under his own roof, who has done you and your government no injury, you do it at your own peril.

"I am, etc: "A. MONTAGUE."

I did not show this letter to Binny, but I said to him that night: "Sir Ashley refuses to leave. I gave him two weeks. At the end of that time he shall start for Albany, willy-nilly. How many men should we take to accomplish this business, Binny?"

"How many tenants and others has Sir Ashley to oppose us?"

"Counting slaves, perhaps two hundred. Why? Do you suppose he'll make a bold stand?"

"That stone house of his *could* be turned into a difficult fortress to carry, Major."

Suddenly the idea of this Tory defying us, madded me, and my patience gave way. But I prudently held my tongue lest I display more anger than I desired that Binny should suspect was in me. Nor was it the bad manners of this dull-minded and arrogant knight that incensed me; it was the thought that his obstinate stupidity was exposing my Nancy to a peril which now gave me constant and sleepless concern.

I was sorry I had given this stubborn fool as much as two weeks to comply with my orders.

I chafed as I waited; because, from the several sources to which I had despatched copies of my letter to Sir Ashley, I was receiving letters in reply officially approving my proposal.

Meanwhile we hastened the late harvest, milled our grain at such mills as the destructives had not destroyed, baled and pressed our hay and straw, and sent our loaded wagons to Fort Hunter where batteaux were ready to take these provisions down the river.

That was the route by which His Excellency's ragged army was fed—from Foxes, Schoharie, and Cobuskill valleys to the Mohawk, thence to Schenectady, to Albany, and so south.

The day now drew near when Sir Ashley's time for dallying would be ended. Much of our late harvest already was safely garnered and on its way to our army. Even some of the remaining valley cattle, hogs, sheep,

and poultry had been started toward Albany, and a heavy bullock guard marched with the herds three times a week.

By the middle of October I began to call in my fatigue details which were very widely scattered,—some even cutting corn on Panther Creek.

Now, during this last year, in the upper valley of Panther Creek which had escaped destruction, a few people had erected comfortable frame houses in the neighbourhood of other houses still standing in that fertile valley. Some hardy folk, even, had already rebuilt their burned homes along the lower valley.

But precaution also had been taken to erect a good, stout stockade of logs, with rifle-platform, around one of the earlier frame houses in the valley; and this slight fortification they named Fort Esperence. It was no fort God knows, and not by any means a certain refuge. But it was the only protected place to which these poor folk could repair in case of peril; and, though not defensible against even small cannon, it might hold out, if assailed by Indians, until aid arrived from the Schoharie Forts.

To this remote valley, then, I sent one of my riders who was to summon my fatigue party to return.

These came riding in one morning just after daylight, escorting a long line of grain wagons, and passed on down the valley; but their junior officer, an ensign, one Barent Van Pelt, came instantly to my quarters and begged to see me alone on affairs of instant importance.

So I took him into the other room—there were only two rooms; and *four families had lived in them* before the red-patches went off;—and lighted a candle, for it was yet somewhat dark.

"Major," said the young ensign, "I have news which will not prove too agreeable to you."

I bade him deliver it the quicker.

"Sir," said he, "while on fatigue beyond Panther Hill, I thought I had better ride over by Ashley to observe which route their grain was taking, because I knew it concerned us mightily.

"Well, sir, a bloody business has happened there."

"At—Ashley?—" But my stiffened lips could scarce form the question.

"Yes, Major. Sir Ashley is dead."

God forgive me for the swift relief that surged through me.

"Of what did he die?" I asked, "and when?"

"Of a death-maul and gun-shot, sir; and nearly two weeks ago."

"What!" I cried; "what is that you say?"

"Yes, sir; murdered. . . . It seems that there were prowlers—doubtless from Butler's regiment or from some partisan corps,—and several Praying Indians roaming among the hills near Ashley.

"They had driven off some of Sir Ashley's fat cattle and cut their throats and eaten them. They stopped one of his carts near the gibbet and took from it three casks of rum.

"Twice Sir Ashley sent his Bow-meester to remonstrate with them, and threatened to complain to Haldimand and to Walter Butler himself. But the depredations did not cease. They stole roasting ears; they stole his geese and other poultry; and finally the Indians cut the throat of a fine colt and carried it off and feasted on it.

"This, it appears, exasperated Sir Ashley; and for the first time he informed Mr. Justice Montague of these outrages.

"From the Bow-meester I learned that they then called to him to accompany them, mounted their horses, and Sir Ashley took a dog-whip, and they galloped to the flatlands—you know, sir?—where the gibbet stands? . . . There is a wood of red oaks to the westward; and there Sir Ashley discovered the Indians and renegades; and a heifer and three of his sheep tied up to saplings.

"At that, it seems, Sir Ashley flew into a rage and got off his horse to take an Indian by the throat, and shook him. All the savages began jabbering and scowl-

ing, and seemed greatly excited. One of the Indians suddenly snatched at Sir Ashley's fob, and received a cut with the dog-whip across his painted face.

"Then everything happened in a second; an Indian struck Sir Ashley a violent blow with a death-maul. He fell like an ox; and a white man in Indian dress shot him where he lay on the ground and then beat his brains out with the butt of his gun.

"The Bow-meester swore to me that the Judge and he also would have been murdered there had he not seized the Judge's bridle, clapped spurs, and galloped for their lives."

The news horrified and stunned me. I sat staring at the Ensign without a word to say.

After a while I found voice enough to ask him what was the situation at Ashley Court.

"Panic," said he. "The day—now nearly two weeks ago—that they brought the murdered man home, almost every hired farm hand on the manor deserted it. Some fled to Albany and the lower Hudson; some, it is thought, went north."

"Do you mean that those cowardly people abandoned Judge Montague and his daughter?"

"Scarcely a dozen remain at Ashley with the Bow-meester."

"Where is the Judge,—and his daughter?"

"They are there."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Major, I spoke with them."

"What had they to say about this murder? What do they now think of their Royal protection?" I demanded bitterly.

"Sir, Mr. Justice Montague is none the less loyal, although in a fearful state of grief and anger. Yet he insists that the crime was done by savages, not in any manner affiliated with Mr. Butler's command—"

"What!"

"So he maintained to me, sir. Nay, more,—he told

me that he believed those savages were partisans of our own and set on by us to murder his brother; and he has sent more than one express with a full account of the affair to Mr. Butler and Major Ross at Niagara, complaining, and demanding, protection from the ferocity of the rebels *under your orders.*"

"Mine!" I gasped.

"Thus he wrote to Mr. Butler."

So astonished was I, and so infuriated that any man dare bring so monstrous an accusation against me that I stood dumb, my very soul ablaze within me.

No, it was not enough that Sir Ashley's obstinacy and his own had imperilled Nancy's life; but also they must lay this murder at my door—believe that I instigated it because I was at odds with Sir Ashley and did threaten to force him to leave his perilous situation for his own safety.

No, this was too monstrous. More than that, their danger was too imminent and too real to palter further with the situation.

They must leave Ashley Court.

Whatever grief my Nancy's sense of duty and affection for her unhappy father had caused me,—whatever agonizing mistake she was further to make by allying herself to such a man as Walter Butler,—ruin irretrievable for her and for me—nevertheless I knew she would never credit ill of me or ever be convinced that it was through any agency of mine that Sir Ashley Montague met his wretched end.

Nor did I believe her father could make her think me guilty, or any lying evidence or roguery used by Butler's emissaries, or McDonald's, could poison her faith in me.

My instant instinct was to go to her although she had forbade me ever more to think on her or to seek her.

Indeed my pride forbade me further to attempt her since she had consented to do the bidding of that deluded, stubborn, exasperated old man who was too blinded by

prejudice to see how he was sacrificing his only child in his bigoted loyalty to an unworthy Sovereign.

And yet how could I remain aloof in the face of such an outrageous accusation, and in the deadly imminence of peril to her and to her father from the very people they had called upon for protection against me and my command?

Well, I was very full of trouble when I sent away my young Ensign and stood in front of my humble quarters watching my men at their last gleaning and packing up.

Binny came riding along the road, just as the sun rose; he sat his saddle carelessly, whistling, and his legs sticking out very cocky in his stirrups; and, beside him rode a stranger wrapped up in a full dark riding cloak so that I could see only his boots, and I knew not whether he was in uniform or no.

When Binny caught sight of me he dropped his legs and sat up decently, and up he comes at proper salute with his cloaked stranger riding beside him.

"Major," says he, "here is a gentleman from below with letters for you—or so he says—and refuses me his name and business although anxious to reveal both of these to yourself."

I looked up at the grave, handsome man who bowed civilly to me.

So I bade him dismount, and took him into my quarters. The early sun was shining through the windows.

There he gave me a letter from Colonel Willet, and I asked him politely to be seated upon my bunk while I read it. This was the message from my commanding officer:

MAJOR NATHAN HOLDEN:

Sir: The bearer, who will remain incognito, is now engaged upon a tour of inspection through your district toward the lower country. He requires an efficient officer to accompany

him as far as the head waters of the Delaware. There another officer from Claverack is to meet him.

You will, therefore, place yourself at his disposal for one day and ride with him through Schoharie as far as Ashley Manor. To Livingston Manor he will proceed without your attendance.

For your information, sir, this gentleman comes from His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, now in Virginia. His Excellency is under considerable apprehension concerning the condition of the grain country here which must feed his army during the next campaign; and he desires to learn what are the chances of defending it, of harvesting the present crops, and of re-sowing the land for another season.

All this you are able to tell this gentleman; and, moreover, to show him so that he may report to His Excellency what his proper eyes have discovered.

In regard to my own affairs, Sir, I am very greatly perplexed and worried by the constant activities of the enemy's scalping parties and the more sinister rumours of Butler's invasion which come to me almost hourly and from every conceivable source.

I need not remind you, Mr. Holden, how few are my resources to cope with these flying scouts and scalping parties or to meet any invasion by the Destructives in force.

I tell you, very frankly, that I do not know whether Walter Butler is near us or far away; and I cannot find out through my scouts.

You will, therefore, while on tour with His Excellency's secret agent, use every endeavour to obtain information concerning Mr. Butler's movements. If any certain knowledge of his whereabouts comes into your possession I solemnly charge you that such information is a matter of life and death to me, to this district, to every man, woman, and child within its confines. And further I charge you that, as you have regard for your honour and your oath of allegiance, you will permit nothing less than your own death to delay you in carrying that news to my headquarters at Fort Hunter, or wherever the enemy's activities have compelled me to be present.

I am sir, with great respect, your humble servant

MARINUS WILLET.

I turned to my unknown:

"Do you know what Colonel Willet has written in this letter, to me?" I asked bluntly.

He smiled politely and said he did know.

"Sir," said I, "are you pleased to set out immediately for the South?"

"Yes, sir," he replied. "Is your horse saddled?"

I told him that it was, and added that my men were rangers, and ready always at a moment's notice.

He made me a civil bow, and I could not tell, as I say, whether he was a superior officer whose cloak concealed the uniform of his rank, or merely a grain expert and merchant who had been despatched hither by His Excellency to return with a true report concerning the Mohawk and Schoharie granaries.

Well, a soldier brought up my horse, and the stranger's horse was brought, also. We mounted.

To Binny, who was waiting, I turned over the command saying that I would be absent no more than a day. And when I rode away up the river road I was entirely confident that in any emergency Binny would do all that should be done, and fully as well as I could accomplish it.

I admit that I entertained a certain curiosity regarding my unknown companion whose bearing and horsemanship led me to believe him to be an officer.

But I never had been in any contact, as far as I knew, with officers or agents of the military intelligence, and knew nothing of their secret service or military ciphers save only that our Captain Nathan Hale had been taken while in that service. Also I saw the silver bullet and the tissue scroll covered with British military cipher which they took from the belly of one of Haldimand's spies after he was hung.

About one o'clock we passed the cross-roads gibbet and went into the red-oak copse where Sir Ashley had been murdered; and here we ate from our haversacks.

He was a silent, kindly, courteous man, my companion, and conversed naturally and affably on all affairs excepting his own.

I had showed him our grain country; and, while we were eating, he had taken his note-book and in it had set down all details I furnished concerning the present harvest, available acreage, kind of crops, roads, transportation—all the facts a merchant or farm-master might require.

Colonel Service's estate was no longer under cultivation and there remained, this side of the Delaware country, only Ashley Manor, now, for him to see and account for.

I, as we were nearing it, was becoming possessed of an ugly humour and a bitter one. All the injustice that Mr. Montague had done me in his mind was now uppermost in mine, and I determined that he should hear from my own lips my opinion of those who stooped to do murder and of those who could credit me with a so contemptible and ungenerous character.

And—God forgive me! although I knew my Nancy was now utterly lost to me—I desired to see her—if for an instant only—even though I might not have a word from her, nor as much as a glance from her lovely eyes.

"Sir," said I to my stranger comrade, "I do not choose to be seen approaching Ashley Court; and, if you have no objections, we will ride by a lumber path to the left, and tie our horses in a maple grove beyond the further orchard."

He said he had no objection.

So we turned off into the logging road before we came to the first fence; and, from behind its screen of trees, I showed him the broad rolling acres of Ashley Manor, now gleaned, and many fields new ploughed; and, I told him what store of grain must be at Ashley Court, and that not one skipple of it ever came to us but, without doubt, somehow found its way to Canada.

And I added that, as soon as the present alarm had

subsided, and it was become certain whether Walter Butler was to come upon us or remain at Niagara, our commissioners of sequestration ought to seize Ashley Court and dispose of it according to law.

He agreed that it should be done as soon as possible, and that the grain, there, should go to His Excellency's army.

It was now about three o'clock in the afternoon, and we had passed Ashley Court while in the woods, and now came out into a sugar bush beyond the farther orchards to the southward.

Here we secured our horses, and I led the way—that sad and painful path which only once had I trodden before—that last day ever that I saw my Nancy.

Apples hung ripe, golden ones and green ones, and others that glowed scarlet or deepest crimson.

I did not notice anybody in the rear of the house, but avoided the stables, granaries, and quarters, and came through a little garden where a few late autumn flowers were in bloom, and, that way to the little rear door out of which my Nancy had led me the last day we were together.

From that porch we could see the stables, and I noticed a number of saddled horses there and several people moving about, who wore livery—or so it seemed to me at that distance—and I took it for granted that they were the Montague servants and slaves.

As the door was open I beckoned my companion and went in; and, instantly, from the dining hall, I heard a considerable noise of voices—loud voices, laughter, and, it seemed to me,—singing.

Perplexed, wondering what kind of guests might be in this house of so recent bereavement, I hesitated. Suddenly, from the music room came a trampling of boots and sound of approaching voices; and I motioned my comrade to follow me, and darted up the stairs to avoid these unknown people and observe who they might be,—for, already, I began to mistrust a so noisy con-

dition in this house, and to wonder uneasily who might be its numerous guests.

But who they were I could not perceive from the landing above; I knew, only that they had trooped into the dining room, and heard more laughter and careless voices in conversation.

As I was kneeling and attempting to see into that room, very quietly my unknown comrade came back from the hall window whither he had ventured to look out upon the lawn.

"Sir," said he calmly, "there are numerous soldiers in green uniforms approaching this house from all sides, and a number of Indians in their paint."

I know I lost all my colour, for the sheer horror of our position made me feel sick and faint in my stomach for a moment.

I got to my feet and heard myself saying calmly enough to him: "Remain here, sir, and if the back way be clear I shall signal you from below—" "You will get yourself killed if you go down stairs," he replied.

And, even as he spoke, several green coated soldiers came into the house by that same back door by which we had entered; and two or three naked savages followed, —Mohawks, painted and stripped for battle.

For one terrible instant I wondered whether these jabbering creatures had done a harm to my Nancy; but, the same moment, saw Mr. Justice Montague come into the hall on his crutches, and beside him—O My God! walked Walter Butler!

Behind them came a most dreadful crew—half-breeds in Iroquois finery—painted Tories in feathers and Iroquois dress, officers of Rangers and Royal Greens—all evidently just ridden up to the house and now welcomed by Mr. Justice Montague to the hospitality of Ashley Court.

Everywhere, now, below, servants were running with food and dishes and great kettles full of steaming meat for the Indians. Some of these squatted down in the

hall around a kettle and fell to gobbling and grunting and seizing bits of smoking food which they tore with teeth and fingers and devoured.

These the Ranger officers presently cleared out of the house; and negro servants carried the smoking kettles to the lawn where soldiers and Indians surrounded them instantly.

Some of the officers went into the dining room; some went out doors. Except for a sentry the lower hall was now empty,—Mr. Butler and Mr. Justice Montague having proceeded to the dining room.

How to get out o' this devil's nest, and that instantly, was our awful problem. It was not likely any of the bloody crew would come up stairs to discover us, but servants might at any moment.

I whispered to my quiet companion that the garret was undoubtedly the safest place, and that he should find his way there as soon as might be.

"And you?" he asked.

"By God," said I in an agony of doubt and indecision, "I must try to find some way out of this hornets nest into which I have led you."

"Your misfortune, not your fault, sir," he said coolly, in my ear.

From where we crouched I could see their sentry in the hall below. No way out for us now.

Presently he touched my arm and motioned me to mount the garret stairs. We went up tip-toe. The door of a vast attic stood open. Inside were piled those accumulations of worn out furniture, fabrics, utensils and usual festoons of drying herbs which are always to be discovered in all garrets.

Behind a sort of barricade of tall Delaware hampers stuffed full of old letters, documents, mangy furs and moth-eaten blankets, we found a dark retreat.

How long we sat there without speaking, listening only, I do not know.

It was evident to us both that we had arrived in this

house between the advent of several scouting parties from the commands of Mr. Butler and some other—McDonald, probably,—Brant, possibly—because there were Mohawk Indians here, as well as Royal Greens, Rangers, and Regulars. I had seen all these uniforms in the motley throng that invaded the hall on Butler's heels.

Even up there in the garret we could hear the noise from the dining room far below us,—shouting, singing, cheers, crash of fallen china and glass.

Suddenly the loud explosion of a musket startled us. Two more shots followed. I sprang to my feet and ran down to the next landing; and saw through the window, that some of the Seneca Indians had shot a steer on the lawn, and were already butchering it.

That was ominous—to see savages already so insolent and out of hand. An officer of the Indian Department went out on the door step to see what the musketry meant. He had a napkin in one hand and a glass of wine in the other; and, he was drunk.

When he saw what the Senecas were about he only laughed; and he came unsteadily into the hall again, laughing and spilling wine at every step.

Now the noise in the dining room had become a very uproar, loud voices raised in song, in laughter, in dispute, —shouting, scuffling, horseplay, loutish jests, a hoarse voice bawling for liquor, the running to and fro of black servants who, very plainly, were beginning to be frightened.

Officers came and went across the hall, all more or less intoxicated.

And where was Nancy? Doubtless secluded somewhere with her own maid and servants in her own apartment and not likely to notice the already disgraceful behaviour and condition of her father's guests, or to let herself be seen at all.

Yes, but what a pity she could not glimpse what manner of folk Mr. Butler drew around him to make

merry with! And what now did her father, with all his dauntless devotion and loyalty to his King, and with all his pride and rectitude and fine manners and unstained virtue—what was *he* thinking of his son-in-law to be, Mr. Butler, who brought such a crew under the same roof where a daughter of the Virginia Montagues dwelt.

As we watched, crouched there behind the bannisters, my companion said to me: "Major, you must find a way out of this house for yourself if not for me. You are on your honour to carry this news to Colonel Willet."

"My God," said I, "how can I get out?"

"Watch your chance. Think not of me. Slip out somehow when opportunity comes, gain your horse, and ride for Schoharie."

"And you, sir?"

"I follow if I can. One of us two, anyway, must live to carry this news to Schoharie."

"Yes," said I, "we must attempt the sentry. One of us should escape his bullet and bayonet. Come sir, if you are ready—"

My whisper was drowned in a sudden tumult from below; and I saw some officers in their cups go into the drawing room and come out dragging with them Mr. Justice Montague, spite of his crutches, his protests, his indignation; and I heard one of the Montours—but which I knew not—bawling out that "Old Wool-sack should come to table and drink like a man with the best o' them!" and added that it was by Captain Butler's orders that he was sent to persuade Mr. Montague.

It was a shameful sight to see how they hustled and pushed the old gentleman on his crutches across the hall into the dining room.

Suddenly Walter Butler appeared at the door, deathly pale, drunk, laughing vacantly, and with his mad stare searching the hall.

"Nancy!" he cried! "Where the devil is that little baggage? By God she shall drain a glass of wine with us—"

He caught sight of the sentry and two other soldiers and an Indian who were sitting on a settle under the stairs.

"You find little Mistress Montague and fetch her to table!" he shouted. "Lively lads! Say that her father desires her presence!"

The sentry took his gun and went toward a corridor which gave on a kind of glass house where were flowers.

Butler stared about him with a ghastly and vacant grin, then turned and went unsteadily into the dining room.

"Now!" I said to my companion.

We ran to the stairs and down. I pointed to the door and bade him run for his horse and get him to Schoharie in God's name.

But before either of us could gain the door, comes a trample of feet; and we sprang back into a dark recess where curtains hung, and barely in time to avoid several soldiers who were frolicking in the passage with some servant maids, and chasing them; but the maids seemed more frightened than merry.

I said to my companion: "I shall not stir from this house until I know Mistress Montague is safe from annoyance by this drunken soldiery."

"Oh," said he, "is *that* the case?"

"Yes, sir; that is the case."

"Sir," said he, "do I understand that you desire to remain and die for this young lady rather than that she suffer insult from Mr. Butler?"

"I shall not leave her."

"And your orders? Do you disobey them?"

"You must ride for me and carry them out. It makes no difference to Colonel Willet or to Schoharie so that one of us survive to warn the Valley."

"Am I to save your military honour while you save that of your lady?"

"I ask you to do so."

"You know it means your death?"

"I cannot leave her."

He looked at me; offered his hand. I pressed it. "You are right," said he quietly, "it is the best way to die, Major."

He parted the curtains and drew a pistol from beneath his cloak.

I was drawing my hunting knife from my belt as he stepped out into the dim passage. Instantly a frightful explosion deafened me and I was strangled by smoke. I saw my companion falling; saw a naked Indian leap upon him with the speed of a panther.

The next second I drove my heavy knife clean through the savage's neck, severing the back-bone.

My ears were still deafened by the explosion of the musket, and every instant I expected would fill that smoky corridor full of soldiers. But I dragged the dead Seneca away from my dying comrade who lay there in his cloak, and, under it, the uniform of a Continental Colonel fully exposed.

"Get you to horse!" he gasped.

"I cannot go!" I said doggedly.

"You cannot stay," he retorted hoarsely. "There are ten thousand lives at stake in the valley and only one at stake in this house!"

"I will not go!" I cried in an agony of revolt and terror.

Then that dying man lifted himself on one bloody arm and caught hold of the fringe on my rifle frock.

"Damn you!" he said. "I rank you! I order you to carry this news to Schoharie! Are there two Arnolds in America!"

"Oh my God!" I cried—"Oh my God!—" and made my way toward the door—sobbing, reeling, blind, crazed by the thought of Nancy in Butler's arms.

I saw nobody; I saw—nothing. . . . And presently found myself running among trees where were scarlet leaves, red as the flames of hell. . . . And

ran against my horse's flank even before my blinded eyes discovered him.

As I mounted I heard a horrible sound break on the shuddering air—the death halloo of the Iroquois. And I knew that the dead Seneca had been discovered and that the alarm had been given.

As I drove spurs into my horse, I heard alarm guns fired from Ashley Court and a bugle's startling warning splitting the October air.

But already I was on the log-road, and riding like a lost soul hell-ward.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Doom!

IT was pitch dark and midnight when my outposts challenged; later still when I rode into our camp on Fox Creek, dismounted and carried a lanthorn into my quarters.

Here, setting the light on my camp table I inked a quill and wrote:

CAMP AT FOXES CREEK,
24th October, 1781.
Midnight.

To COLONEL WILLET,

Sir: Pursuant to your orders of yesterday's date I accompanied His Excellency's Secret Envoy, whose name is unknown to me, as far as Ashley Court. Here, while cautiously reconnoitring the residence, our retreat was unexpectedly cut off by a very considerable flying scout of the enemy. This war party consisted of Royal Greens, Regulars, Rangers, Mohawks and Senecas, with several Forrester-Officers and others of the Indian Department including Captain Walter Butler, to the number of fifty or more.

In attempting to escape in order to carry this intelligence to you, I regret to report that His Excellency's Secret Envoy was killed by an Enemy Indian.

Except for this flying Scout at Ashley Court, I saw nothing of the enemy, but must suppose that Ashley was only a rendezvous, and that their main body is proceeding to the west and north of us. It is likely, therefore, that the enemy will first show themselves in force in the vicinity of Warrensbush.

I saw no depredations committed other than the murder of His Excellency's Secret Emmisary, but noticed that Mr. Butler and a number of his Forrester-officers were in liquor and riotous, and disposed to treat the gentlemen and ladies of the late Sir Ashley's household with little ceremony—"

Here I could scarcely write the words so sick was I with apprehension concerning Nancy—but the letter must be written, and I wrote it to the end neglecting no civility.

Binny had come, and I gave him my letter to send Express to headquarters at Warrensbush or Fort Hunter, or wherever Colonel Willet might be, and get an answer back by morning if it killed a dozen horses.

It was a dreadful night I spent there at Foxes Creek, pacing my quarters and watching the stars grow dim and our watch-fires pale and fade to ashes.

Our bugle blew about five o'clock. After roll-call I went up on a small hill with Binny to watch for the Express. The sun came up in mists; it grew colder. Below us, now, I could see my men being told off to do duty along the bottom-lands, where some hay and grain stacks still remained. It was too misty to see whether there was smoke in the sky.

About ten o'clock, as I was going down to the road, below the hill, determined to send out a small scout toward Warrensbush, a mounted man, bareheaded, striking wildly at his foaming horse, came rushing full upon us; and already we could hear his terrible and despairing cry:

"Butler! Butler! Butler is in the Valley!"

There was very little excitement,—perhaps because my people had been so long expecting the blow. Even its suddenness produced no panic.

I called to my little bugler and said in a natural voice:

"Blow boots and saddles, Johnny."

I then took my rifle and fired three signal shots; and heard them taken up and repeated distantly and more distantly along the Valley which also was ringing with the wild music of the bugle.

I could see my men along the bottom-lands, in the fields and on cleared hills, flinging away rake and fork

and scythe and running for their horses where always some one of the party was detailed to hold them.

Boom! Across the rolling country came the first heavy cannon shot from the Schoharie Forts. Boom! sounded the more distant signal from the Upper Fort. Boom! answered the Lower Fort, boom! boom!

Now a dozen galloping riders were arriving from the nearer harvest fields, fringes tossing, raccoon-tails and buck-tails blowing in a fresh, keen wind that seemed coldly scented with snow. All around me restive horses were trampling, rearing, plunging as though the far cannon thunder and the bugle notes excited them, while a continual stream of horsemen kept arriving from every direction.

I could see no smoke anywhere in the sky; no ominous haze over forest or valley—always the dreaded sign that torch and hatchet were busy once more.

Some mounted militia came riding in from Brakabeen, who said they heard there was smoke to be seen on the Mohawk below Caughnawaga, and also south of Panther Mountain.

With these militia, some mounted trappers, couriers-du-bois, and rangers, I had now at hand some three score riders.

I told Binny to form them and put them in motion; and I spurred forward down the valley followed by my two Loup Indians.

Below the mouth of Foxes Creek a rude log bridge had been built recently. As we came to it I heard the melancholy conch-horns of riflemen blowing far down the main river; and spurred to overtake them.

They proved to be a flying scout of some two score Virginia riflemen, militia, and Massachusetts troops, and were marching swiftly for Keator's Rift.

Their officer, an ensign from the XI Virginia, paced my horse as I talked to him; and his men continued on a dog trot behind.

He said: "A farmer has just arrived with positive account that last night Butler's green-coats under Major Ross had crossed the Schoharie near its mouth. Today his baggage wagons forded the Mohawk."

"Has Ross been all night and all this morning on the Mohawk without our knowing?" I demanded.

"That's what they say. He burned nothing, yesterday, but went very quietly about his murdering so that no prisoners should escape to give an alarm and no smoke should betray his presence.

"But there's smoke enough now, they say, all the way to Tribes Hill and below. What's left of Caughnawaga is afire and all the farms on both banks of the Mohawk are burning. That's Butler's work."

"What are your orders?" I demanded.

"To scout out toward Guy Park and there await support from Colonel Willet. He has militia and some Continentals and Major Rowley's Massachusetts levies; and he marched last night."

"Have you heard that smoke had been seen south of Panther Mountain?"

"I heard so; yes, sir. It may be true if the enemy be triply divided or if there be still another column come through from below."

I reined in my horse and waved him forward, and waited a moment, watching men running across the fields and clearing, from every direction, to join this little flying scout.

Already, behind me, I could hear horses' hoofs drumming across the new log bridge; and I gathered bridle and cantered forward to meet them.

There were now in my command about a hundred and eighty riders, including hastily mounted militia, free trappers, and forest-runners.

Binny drew bridle and halted them with upflung arm.

"Any further news?" I asked very quietly.

"It seems certain that there is smoke beyond Panther Mountain, Major. What news have you, sir?"

"That there is little doubt that Ross with the main body is in the Valley and headed for Johnstown. Willet is marching to head him off at the fords, but will be too late. Currytown is again afire; Caughnawaga is burning; both banks of the Mohawk are in flames."

We looked at each other in bitter silence.

"Binny," I said, "we can't leave Schoharie naked of defence."

"No, Major."

"Well," said I, "God knows whether I do right or wrong in this dilemma facing us. But my judgment is this, Binny: you shall take one-half of this command and follow yonder flying scout which is under Willet's orders; and subject yourself to those same orders.

"And I shall take one-half of this company, and attempt to intercept Willet east of Currytown, moving out through Ashley and Panther Creek Valley to warn all folk to the Forts. . . . What is your opinion?"

"It is yours, Major."

"Very well; pick up your men and get forward."

He swung his horse and trotted back along the restive column. Midway he divided it, turned, and cantered back, offering me a gay and careless salute as he passed.

"We meet at the Mohawk fords!" I called after him; then, placing myself at the head of my column, I led them back at a gallop across the log bridge, up the main valley headed for Ashley Court.

The country permitted of no mounted flankers, and I had no Oneida runners, so, as speed was the essence of our business, I trusted in God, and galloped with only four advanced riders to guard us from disaster.

The day had turned cold with a keen wind and flying clouds through which the sun played over an autumn tinted world. Many trees already were naked of leaves; others flamed gold and russet and deep crimson; and everywhere along the road grew blue and purple mounds

of asters and crimson blueberry bushes and sumach in velvet red fruit.

I would not let myself think of danger to my Nancy, or that any untoward thing had befallen Ashley in its so utter nakedness of defence.

Always I was scanning the southern and eastern skies above hill and forest to espy the dread stain of smoke; but, as yet, saw none; and galloped under the cross-roads gibbet and on along the waste of swale, on, on through oak wood and sugar bush, and came out into the cleared land of Ashley Manor.

The great sweep of sky behind the forests was unstained by any wisp of smoke save only that which floated up and blew wide from the great stone chimneys of Ashley Court.

I saw nobody in the fields; no sheep or cattle; but all the buckwheat and corn had now been reaped, and only stubble glowed yellow or wine-red under the flying gleam and shadow of sun and passing cloud.

At the swing-gate I halted my command, then spurred up the drive to the door.

Before I could dismount or even draw bridle, I saw Mr. Justice Montague open the door and come out upon the stone step upon his crutches.

I saluted him with every civility. He seemed very pale and old and grey, but drew himself erect and looked at me sternly out of his faded, wrinkled eyes.

When he knew me he lifted his black hat in acknowledgment of my politeness.

"Sir," said I, "is all well with this house?"

"My daughter and myself are well, sir." He gave me a haughty look and added;—"as well, sir, as an English family can be who lately have been most grossly affronted by Englishmen wearing the uniform of their King."

"Have British soldiers insulted you, sir?"

"Yes sir, and past all pardon. I and my daughter have been most grossly and ignobly used by troops serving the king of England!"

"Sir," said I, "they must have laboured under some misapprehension that they were dealing with—" I bowed to him,—"a rebel family."

"By God, sir!" he said fiercely, "rebel or loyal, no gentleman would deal with respectable people as Mr. Butler and his so-called officers have dealt with me and mine!"

I asked as calmly as I could: "Miss Nancy has come to no harm I trust?"

"None, sir, but it was a Mohawk Indian,—Brant—who checked that beast, Walter Butler—or God knows to what drunken lengths his debauched character had urged him."

After a moment's silence: "Sir," said I, "have you any recent news of the enemy in these parts?"

He flushed at that, but answered with perfect comprehension and firmness that he had no recent knowledge of any enemy.

"Well, sir," said I, "the Mohawk Valley is on fire. But you, sir, enjoy Royal Protection—"

Then such a blaze came out of his eyes that never before have I beheld such a living flame of rage and scorn.

"Major Holden," said he, "if there is aught that I can do to aid in the taking of this unmitigated scoundrel, Walter Butler, I pray you instantly command me."

"Mr. Justice," said I, "you can do much to lighten my present responsibility. Therefore, I beg you to collect such of Sir Ashley's people as have not deserted you; and stay not to pack up but get you instantly and with speed straight to the Middle Fort. Will you do so?"

"Major," said he, "my Bow-meester and his people have taken three wagons of supplies to Fort Esperence in the Panther Valley. I could not abandon them; and therefore shall go to the Schoharie Forts by way of Panther Creek."

"Very well, sir," said I; "and perhaps that is the safer way—I mean by Panther Valley and Foxes Creek. And I think you should tell those people at Fort Esperence that they would be safer in the Middle Fort. . . . Where is Miss Nancy?"

"Ploughing," he said with a calm pride that awed me, —"because we understand that His Excellency General Washington's army is in need of grain for next year's campaign."

I took off my cap and bowed very low to this Virginia gentleman, then touched my horse with my spurs and rode around the house to the commanding knoll behind it.

And the first I saw was a woman, ploughing, and knew it was Nancy Montague in homespun, naked of throat and arms and but a hanker tied around her hair, ploughing the soil of the Schoharie Valley.

The reins lay loosely on her sunburned neck; both little sunburned hands grasped the handles of the plough to which a great, sturdy horse was harnessed.

Then, on a tree-stump in the field, I saw a little boy of ten years, perhaps, standing on guard with a rifle which seemed too heavy for him to lift.

Beyond was a field of late buckwheat, where two negroes swung scythes. And all else, as far as I could see, was empty of mankind—deserted fields, meadows, pastures flanked by the ominous black forests of pine and spruce.

Nobody had noticed me. The child on guard was watching the woods; and it was plain that nobody apprehended any danger from the direction of the house and highroad.

I walked my horse down into the ploughed field, and drew bridle and sat motionless as my Nancy turned her horse and plough on the return furrow.

Even so she had not discovered me until both horses neighed. I saw her start as in fear, and look up, and stand so, her horse pricking its ears at mine, she staring at me.

I took my fur cap from my head and bowed low to her in my saddle.

Then, cap in hand, I dismounted and came across the fresh furrows to where she stood.

Her face had gone white under her tan, but grew rosy enough now.

"Nancy," I said, "what do you here at the plough?"

"I drive a furrow as straight as the next," says she defiantly.

"So it is *you* who plough the rebel granary? And the Painted Death in the hills!"

But she seemed not to understand.

"Death," says she, "cometh to all, and none can escape by human wit, nor can human foresight and cunning evade or avoid it by any wisdom of its own."

"You shall instantly leave this spot and go to the Middle Fort," said I. "Walter Butler is burning the Valley!"

At that, instead of fear, a bright, swift anger reddened her.

"Has that contemptible young man returned again with his outlaws and his Indians to cut our throats?"

"His green-coats are burning and murdering in the *Mohawk* Valley. But where his outlying scouts and scalping parties may strike I do not know. So call in your blacks and yonder child, and stay not for packing so much as a silver thimble, but go with your father to the Middle Fort. . . . I do not believe you shall need to tarry there very long. . . . Because, under God, I believe that this time we shall do his business for Walter Butler."

She pulled a horn whistle from her bosom and blew a shrill summons for her blacks, and for the little boy; and they hastened towards us across the stubble.

From her neck she loosened and lifted the reins; the negroes freed the horse; I turned toward the house, leading my horse; and the others followed, leaving my Nancy's plough in the furrow behind us.

"So far as I know," said I, "the danger lies to the eastward. Yet, you should lose no time in getting forward to the Schoharie Forts. . . . Your promise?"

"Yes, Nathan."

"And will abide there until I come?"

"Yes, Nathan. . . . Where do you ride?"

"To the Mohawk Fords."

"Why?"

"To cut off Butler's people, if that may be."

"And if you arrive too late?"

"We follow him."

"Where?"

"Wherever he leads."

"I understand," she said.

When we came to the doorstep she turned and looked at my riders where they sat their horses outside the gate.

"You are not many," she murmured.

"Others are marching on Butler."

"Pray step into the house," she said in an unsteady voice.

I opened the door and followed her inside. Her father looked up at us from the library where he was gathering some papers from a desk.

Then my Nancy turned and wound both arms around my neck and looked me in the face.

"Nathan," said she, "I am yours; and am deep in love; and ever shall obey you and do your bidding." Her face blushed rosy from her hair to her throat where the kerchief framed it. "If it be also your inclination," said she, "to exchange a kiss,—I am not—unwilling."

Slowly and close our lips met; there was the fragrance of tears in her breath.

In wordless embrace we stood, clasped in that deep and trembling silence which confesses all.

Then she turned her head and freed herself and went into the library to her father. And I saw him take her into his arms and look sternly yet not unkindly upon me.

When I went out onto the doorstep I saw the two

blacks and the lad had harnessed horses to a farm wagon and were driving up to the front door.

Then I got into my saddle and rode out to where my men sat their horses.

"If," said I to the troop captain, "there be any man here who can take us to the Mohawk Ford by a quicker route than Panther Valley, let him come forward."

The captain turned, stood up in his stirrups, and shouted the inquiry. Two weather-beaten forest-runners left the ranks and rode up to me.

"Can you do this?" I asked.

They said they could. I waved them up beside me, wheeled my horse and, lifting high my rifle, swung it forward.

"March!" echoed the troop-captain.

For a mile we cantered through cleared lands, then my guides swung to the eastward and we entered a pasture full of ferns, rocks, and scattered saplings, and our road became a sheep-walk.

Up the slope in single file we trotted to the edge of the woods. Here was the sandy bed of a dry torrent, and we took it, always climbing, until we came out on a crest of hills where was a vast waste of burned stumps and a ploughed table-land.

Straight across this my forest-runners galloped, and into the woods again. But these were giant pines, and no undergrowth impeded us for miles, until at length, we saw light glimmering ahead and rode out into the valley of a little brook that I never before had heard of.

In this valley were three log houses; and from one of them came a man to meet us, carrying a rifle and leading a gaunt horse saddled only with an Indian blanket.

He made a signal to me that he had news; and, when I pulled up beside him:

"They are fighting in Johnstown," said he. "Jan Van Dyck is my neighbour who passed through an hour

since with despatches for the Schoharie Forts. He saw the smoke and heard the musketry in Johnstown."

I thanked him; we trotted down the slope and filed into the woods where, presently, our trail became a cart-track deep in swale and weed; but here we could move two abreast, and so got forward in better time, although several of my horses and their riders fell, what with bog-holes and hidden gulleys. But no damage happened to either horse or rider; and some cursed but everybody laughed, which heartened all, I think, and relieved the tension of our sombre thoughts.

Now, presently, we came near the edge of the woods, and there smelled smoke, and saw it as we rode out into cleared land. God! The valley that lay below was choked with it so that, for great distances, it hung over the river and hid it.

South of us I saw two houses on fire, and beyond a great pall of smoke along both banks of the river.

Straight down the slope we rode, avoiding stumps, rocks, and woodchuck burrows; and then through a piece of corn, and beyond across fertile meadows where clover grew again.

Now, near to us, I saw batteaux crossing, full of our militia men, and poled by riflemen.

An Oneida runner came speeding from the shore to tell me that Binny's command were crossing at a ford above us.

Riding thither I made them out through the smoke, and carried my command into line behind them.

The water was very cold, and not shallow; and some horses, floundering through, were obliged to swim a yard or so.

On the other bank were some woebegone Tryon militia who pulled doleful faces at us and bawled out that all was lost and our troops running from the field.

Which so exasperated me that I strove to ride them down, and could scarce control my rifle, so incensed was I to hear these skulkers howling calamity in the very

faces of my men. But, if intimidated, my Schoharie riders did not show it; and I even saw one great fellow laugh at these malingerers, and my Indian, Ghost-snake, spat upon them as we galloped past.

Now, all along the Johnstown road, people called to us from fence and house; and some gave us good cheer and clapped their hands; others shouted that our men were fleeing through Johnstown and that the Fort was taken; and still others assured us that a great battle was going on near Johnson Hall and not in the town at all; and that cannon had been plainly heard, and the smoke of the conflict seen.

The first certain news we had was from a wounded militia officer who was being led away on a horse.

He was in great pain and very angry; and gave me an account how our infantry had driven Butler's men from the field, and were masters of it, when, God only knew why, a senseless panic seized them and they broke and made a shameful and disorderly flight.

He knew no more, having been wounded at that time.

I did not tell any of this to my men. Also I looked askance at my two Loup d'Orange who had listened to this tale of woe.

They rode calmly on either side of me. They were superb in their feathers and naked paint.

And now, as they rode, they began to sing a strange, solemn kind of chant, which was not devoid of savage beauty:

*"Eha eyo eyo heyeye!
Eha eyo eyo heyeye!
Eha eyo eyo heye yoyo!
Heye eyeyo.
Tokalaka miye cayaya!
Nakenu lawa onwelo
Weha eyo eyohe yeyo!"

* A Dakota death-song, transmitted through the Sauks to the Eastern Algonquins. A free translation:
"Behold the Fox! The Fox am I!
And yet a little while the Fox shall hunt,
Then shall the Fox go hunting never more!"

"What sing you?" I asked the Ghost-snake.

"The Fox song."

"And what is that?"

"Our death-song."

I said nothing. It was the custom of warriors who face what they suppose to be a fatal battle. For I could not deny what that wounded officer had told me.

My men, now, were very restless for we began to hear the firing, and already were cantering through the outlying farms of Johnstown.

Nearer the town people swung their hats and kerchiefs to encourage us. And, as we galloped into William Street, we heard a great cheering of people from the *jail, and more cheering from the Court House, and saw wounded men lying on litters in front of St. John's church.

A little farther, and an officer galloped up and called to me to follow him:

"We are driving Butler's men! His Indians are running and his Greens and Highlanders are moving off," said this officer. "Sir, you are to put your men in where Major Rowley and the Massachusetts men are turning their flank!"

"Gallop!" I cried; and my bugle-horn blew it clear and loud.

Now we caught sight of Rowley's men, skirmishing, and moving forward along a piece of woods. There was a cleared pasture and a thicket in front of them.

As we charged I caught a distant glimpse of the Hall through the smoke; and the next instant we were in the brush field and had galloped through a line of greencoats who had been retreating at a dog-trot, and who instantly broke across a bog and scattered into the woods like so many rabbits; and were gone.

"This is no place for mounted men!" I called out to Binny who came crashing through the bushes at full speed.

* Made into a stockaded fort.

He gave me a ghastly look as he pulled in his horse.

"Sir," said he hoarsely, "the enemy's savages and partisans are attacking the post in Panther Valley!"

"Where got you that!" I asked, appalled.

"A fugitive out of Fort Esperence riding to overtake us. I met him but now with Rowley's men. Rowley says that he and Willet can take care of Butler. . . . Sir, Mistress Montague and her father are arrived at Fort Esperence."

Such awful fear as I then knew I hope never to know again.

"Binny, where lies our duty?" I gasped.

"At Esperence Fort, sir. I sent a rider to Willet who replies that we should go instantly and that he has Butler full in hand and is certain to destroy him."

I pulled my horse around; made a motion toward the bugler lad:

"Sound, Binny—" but my voice broke and I set my teeth in my lips and drove home my spurs.

Oh, God, what a ride! I saw nothing; the world swam around me and went streaming past me like a thick mist. It was no horse I rode; it was a nightmare out of hell.

I crushed back thought—strangled it—choked the cry that strained and strained in my throbbing throat.

In my deafened ears sounded the thunder of my riders; in my blinded eyes I seemed to see flames—always flames, leaping, creeping, flashing up, dancing, sinking to an infernal flicker, only to flare up in horror. . . . I heard as in a dream the voices of my Indians saying: "Courage, brother! Courage!" And sometimes Binny galloped beside me, and I knew he was looking at me and meant to be kind.

The first sound that aroused me from this hellish, headlong dream of terror was a gunshot not far away.

Then I saw three savages running to get out of our way; saw Binny brain one with his gun-stock, and some

of my riders overtake the others and beat them to death with gun-barrel and hatchet.

And now we were in Panther Valley where every house and barn was afire; and half a mile away I saw the stockade swimming in white smoke and naked Indians swarming around it.

"Ride!" roared Binny, "they're carrying the stockade and have beat in the gate! Ride!"

Already some of the destructives saw us. We could hear them yelling, and saw them leaving the stockade and running into the standing corn. And the next instant we were among them and tearing them to pieces.

When I rode into the stockade through the shattered gate I saw the dead lying there—old men, women, little children in their blood outside the frame house.

If I myself were dead or alive I scarcely knew, so terrible the blinding fear that possessed me. At my feet lay an old woman scalped, and her belly emptied of her guts. I could not look again upon those dead people—yet stood there among them as dead at heart as they.

I heard Binny shouting to me, and lifted my head. He was pointing at the shattered door of the farm house that stood inside the stockade. A dead rifleman lay across the threshold.

Then, suddenly, within the doorway I saw my Nancy standing and staring at me out of eyes still wide with the horrors she had gazed upon that day.

CHAPTER XXXV

In the First Year of the Republic

THOSE who dig up the hatchet shall perish by it. Under an Oneida hatchet died the Were-wolf of the North, Walter Butler.

I did not see him die, but those few who did say that he died game to the end. Which, I confess, is not like any wolf.

It was on that dogged flight from Johnstown battle, far in the wilderness,* on the edge of a wild and icy river, that Walter Butler died.

The first snow of the year was falling when this young Scourge of the North galloped his big black horse over the ford, and, in mid-stream, turned and shook his empty pistol at his pursuers.

On the opposite bank he coolly dismounted to dip a cup of water from a little spring that bubbled there; and, at that instant, the sun slipped from the clouds that veiled it and shone redly through the falling snowflakes.

A single ruddy ray struck the tin cup he lifted to his lips; a lurking ranger and three Oneida scouts took aim at that glimmering spark, and fired. And Butler fell.

Into the icy water leaped a painted Oneida. The wounded man lifted himself on his left arm. One eye was torn away. The other glared at the approaching executioner,—stared unflinchingly into his painted face as the flashing hatchet dashed his soul into eternal night.

So died young Walter Butler. And never before have I known any American to treat a dead enemy with contempt. For the Oneida asked leave to take the scalp. And the humane and chivalrous Colonel Willet, looking down from his saddle at that battered corpse sprawling

* The place is still known as Butler's Ford.

on the bloody snow, shrugged his shoulders and rode on. And the scalped body of Walter Butler was left unburied, unhonoured, all alone amid the snowy desolation of a howling wilderness.

If the grey wolves stole thither by moonlight, they discovered only their own dead. Maybe they mourned him there, under the frozen stars. There was no other mourning for this man.

He it was who once would wade to empire over broken hearts, and through a sea of tears and blood!

That salt and crimson sea had risen to his knees e'er chance pulled a soiled shroud over his eyes and mouth. Fate stopped with virgin snow those nostrils that had been so filled with arrogance and pride. Destiny closed those marred and melancholy eyes.

On what they opened only God can know.

Well, as I sit here writing my memoirs, it seems a century since these things happened; yet scarce a year has passed since the dread day I bore my Nancy out of that butchery at Esperence stockade and rode with her and her brave old father all the long way into Albany.

Here I took my leave of them. They had lost all,—everything they had possessed in all the world except the clothes that covered them.

For I learned, now, that Dunmore had burned their mansion when Norfolk was bombarded and delivered to the flames. And as we entered Albany the news was fresh that Ashley Court was burning to the ground and every barn and lodge and barrack with it. And now the Crown would confiscate the last of their estate in England. Nothing would remain to them except the acres in Virginia where the war now raged between His Excellency and my Lord Cornwallis.

At the Half-Moon Inn where we had taken quarters, I laid the matter very plainly before my Nancy and her father—not mincing words or sentiment or shamed by pride.

I showed them, in a leather bag, what hard money

I possessed, which, with my father's watch and a pair of silver-mounted pistols taken in battle, were all I had except my house and stock and land, and a military chest crammed with valueless Continental paper dollars.

These I placed upon the bed in my Nancy's chamber; and her father, without false pride, and with a fine simplicity, laid upon the bed his gold-topped walking-stick, his jewelled watch and fobs and snuff-box, the gold buckles from his knees and shoon, and stock; and a leather belt heavy with new-minted guineas.

To these my Nancy added her mother's rings, her chain and locket, both gold buckles from her silken shoon, and two garter buckles of gold set round with sapphires.

This was the family wealth; and we took council over it.

Then I took what jewellery was there and went out and pledged it with a usurer—a Dutchman—and never have I seen any Jew alive with whom I had not rather dealt,—God forgive him!

When I left him I was so madded that I scarce could see the street ahead of me; but made my way to the wharves and found a sloop, and, having struck another dirty bargain, I did command it against a favourable wind and tide—for there was no time to be lost before the Hudson froze.

Well, I came again to the Half-Moon Tavern, and there gave to Mr. Montague what remained of the money.

"Sir," said I, "my house in Lexington is small, but safe; and my tenant will serve you and account to you for my share in the proceeds of the farm.

"All moneys and securities which you have put away in England are lost to you, I think. Nor can you hope for anything from your New York bankers.

"Remains the little you have left in Virginia. Still, with that, and this hard money and a roof at Lexington, perhaps our present hardship may become not unendurable."

He looked at me grimly: "And you, sir?"

"Oh," said I, "I shall need no hard money in Schoharie."

After a long silence: "Major Holden," said he, "my forefathers in silk and plumes once had the honour of charging yours who galloped into battle clad in iron and leather."

He bowed to me: "Sir, you were the victors then—as you are now. But only a descendant of one who fought with Oliver ever could make a captive of my race."

"Sir," said I, "it is I who am your prisoner, and a pensioner on your kindness. And shall ever strive to serve you for no other wages than your approbation."

I turned to my Nancy who was gazing at me starry-eyed yet still worn and pallid from the horrors of the Valley.

"It is nearly night," she said; "must you go?"

"Yes," said I wearily.

She came to me and placed her hands against my heart and laid her face upon them.

A little while we stood, then kissed each other as seriously as two children; and I turned away and took my rifle and my cap and war-belt with its dangling knife and hatchet.

As I buckled it, in the street outside our window I heard a hoarse voice shouting news; and other voices crying out at it—and heard windows opposite opening and women shrilling, and a growing tumult everywhere.

My instant thought was that the city had been attacked. Then, listening, I thought to hear cheering.

My Nancy went to the window and opened it. Instantly the room was filled with the roar from the street; and I heard drums, and a church bell ringing, and the galloping of light-horsemen; and suddenly the thunderous shock of a great gun from the fort shook the room.

Then, under our window a clear voice cried:

"Cornwallis is taken! The war ends! God bless George the Virginian!"

And a vast roar rose from a thousand throats: "God bless George the Virginian! Cornwallis is taken!"

And the whole house rocked and trembled with the deafening outcrash of the cannon.

So long—so long ago it seems—yet happened yesterday.

As I sit here in our little house in Lexington, a-writing of my memoirs, I raise my head and strive to see the centuries to come. This new Republic we have made—is it destined to survive the ages? God knows it has been founded upon the bones of those who died for it.

Shall it endure? Yes; as long as it enshrines that unstained temple builded by friends to liberty. No longer. Freedom is the keystone to its citadel. Pry that loose, and the great fabric falls.

Guard well that keystone. Open and insidious enemies and well-intentioned fools will strive to tamper with it. Bigotry will assail it; intolerance gnaw at it; the tyranny of your neighbours' conscience will try to dislodge it with design to substitute another keystone dedicated to a lesser goddess. Law will be invoked, or new made to scratch its surface and mar its purity.

God forbid that any majority ever may engrave upon that stone any law imposing its personal belief upon a minority unconvinced.

Never should the word "Forbidden" be chiselled there. For, if it is, the nation will swarm with those parasites and lice which poor old Europe breeds—and known as agents, spies, officials, secret police, pryers into privacy, moral inquisitors,—the slinking sleuth-hound that noses in the track of prosperity to bite at its sturdy heels,—the apostles of that barbarous Jehovah who shout: "Believe what we believe, or pay the penalty!"—the busy zealots who would fashion laws to govern what you shall eat and drink, and what apparel you shall wear;—the sullen, dull, and envious leveller, jealous of success, who

would drag down everything above his own stature by laws and penalties.

We are sons of those same people who fled from tyranny to a land of liberty,—and there became tyrants! —who emigrated because of religious persecution to seek freedom to worship,—and, God help us, we hanged witches! And in a hundred years to come there will be others in this republic ready to do the like.

Well, for the Republic there remains only one certain refuge and a single rock; the Constitution. Upon it, only, Liberty remains inviolate. For we are simple folk who fought this war and who have made of this continent a nation. We meddle not with one another's business or inclinations so long as those do no harm to others. No man's privacy is invaded by his Government; no police are required except as protection against criminals. Our laws shelter, but do neither invade nor oppress. We are not taxed to support a vast army of petty Government officials and spies upon privacy as is the case abroad, where Government is paternal.

If ever there comes a day when this Government assumes that character and colour, then begins the end of this Republic.

If ever there comes a day when this indissoluble and Federal Government deprives, by majority of vote, any single sovereign state of the very least of its liberties, then is the keystone loosened in the arch, and the great fabric trembles.

I know only one remedy for such menaces as these if ever they are to come upon our people when they have wandered too far afield; and that is a swift retreat to the firm fortress of the Constitution.

And if ever there shall live any man who pretends to greater wisdom, greater faith, greater virtue than our redeemer of mankind, George Washington, you shall know him for a fool and a dangerous one.

Beware the friend to liberty whose private conscience

sets him itching. No stupider potential tyrant ever lived. And George the Third meant well. But no man ever lived, save Christ, whose will meant liberty to all on earth.

My window is open as I write, and a soft June breeze flutters the papers on my table.

Robins, everywhere, are singing their pretty evening songs in the last rosy rays of the sun.

From my window I can see my honoured father-in-law, leaning upon his walking-stick, and slowly pacing the velvet lawn to take the air—a grave, grey man—yet perhaps unreasonably impatient for a grandson.

But Lord! all life is still before my Nancy and myself.

I sit a-thinking. In October will be our wedding anniversary. Binny hath written to say he will come. Captain Hawkes and his pretty lady promise. And lately, in Boston, I encountered two young men attired in the sober height of decorum and fashion, who promised they would come,—Mr. Ghost-snake and Mr. Gadfly, now allotted a fine farm by our grateful Government, and a good house already built upon it.

Well, it should be a most respectable reunion, with polite toasts offered and every elegance observed. . . . I hope so.

The level sun-rays fall across my page.

Under the window the old syringa is all starred with white.

Now, from the little parlour, through the scented dusk, comes the sweet, faint ripple of the spinet; and my Nancy's voice:

"Sing, little bird, in yonder tree,
And tell me who that maid shall be,
Or fair or brown, or tall or small,
Who one day shall appear to me
And at whose pretty feet I'll fall—
Sing, little bird, divinely sing,
And bid me wear a wedding ring!"

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